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'When Shall These Dry Bones Live?'
Interactions between the London Missionary Society and the San
Along the Cape's North-Eastern Frontier, 1790-1833.

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MCDJAR001

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
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COMPULSORY DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signed by candidate

*“And the Lord said to me, Prophesy to these bones, and say to them,
O dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord!”*

Ezekiel 37:4

*“The Bushmen have remained in greater numbers at this station... They attend regularly to
hear the Word of God but as yet none have experienced the saving effects of the Gospel.
When shall these dry bones live? Lord thou knowest.”*

G. Kolbe to J. Philip

Bushman Station

2 November 1829

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ABSTRACT

This study is an analysis of the interactions between the London Missionary Society (LMS) and the San during the period from 1799, when the LMS first arrived at the Cape, to 1833, when the LMS abandoned Bushman Station, the last concerted effort on the part of the Society to administer a mission station directed towards the San. The LMS missions to the San, beginning with the Sak River mission of Johannes Kicherer and ending with Bushman Station under James Clarke, have been investigated with a view to gaining insight into the ways the San responded to pressures upon their cultural integrity and independence stemming from the steady northward advance of the colonial frontier as well as the consolidation of Griqua hegemony along the Middle Orange River during the early 19th century.

The San have been widely treated as unreceptive to the work of the missionaries and incapable of acculturation and 'Christianisation' in South African historiography. The discussion draws extensively on first-hand missionary and traveller accounts of the day-to-day proceedings at a number of LMS mission stations established to minister to the San. These mission stations serve as a means to 'see' how the San did in fact adapt and acculturate in response to colonial processes of land dispossession and water alienation. By evaluating the motivations behind the founding of these mission institutions and by examining the numerous factors that resulted in the failure or closure of each one, the interactions between the LMS and the San begin to shed new light on how San individuals and groups responded to the social upheavals associated with the processes of an expanding Cape Colony.

The first chapter considers how the northward movements of the trekboers undermined the independence of the San in the north-eastern Cape interior during the late 18th century and what influences these had on the efforts of the LMS to pacify, 'Christianise' and 'civilise' the San. The arrival of the LMS at the Cape and the initiation of the Society's first San missions at Blydevoorzicht Fontein and the Sak River are considered within the context engendered by the violence and turbulence associated with the advancing frontier. This theme is maintained throughout the study, which goes on to investigate the establishment of the San missions at Toornberg and Hephzibah in the second chapter.

The internal dynamics within and external influences upon the LMS at the Cape are also assessed in order to establish how these worked to facilitate or impede the Society's efforts among the San and any

likely success those efforts may have had. This becomes particularly relevant in the third and final chapter, which discusses the founding of Philippolis and Bushman Station. Within the space of a few years, both missions were re-orientated towards other population groups. The LMS' commitment to the San waned and groups such as the Griquas attracted the attention of figures such as the Society's superintendent John Philip.

The study has found that significant cultural adaptation did occur among certain San communities in the north-eastern Cape interior during the early 19th century. The adoption of a more sedentary way of life as well as the cultivation of the ground are two examples exhibited by these missions of how some San responded to the challenges facing their cultural framework during this time.

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This dissertation forms but one component – albeit a substantial one – of my MA qualification requirements, and thus, although not directly related to this study, I would nonetheless like to thank a few others at the Department of Historical Studies at UCT who I have had the pleasure of interacting with over the past two years. In particular, Prof. Howard Philips, who patiently put up with me while I procrastinated over my dissertation topic, and Prof. Mohamed Adhikari, whose kind words of encouragement were much needed and appreciated.

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Thank-you.

1) Introduction

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

Gospel of Matthew 28:19-20

In a letter written by Arie Vos in January 1806 at the Sak River mission to the directors of the London Missionary Society (LMS), he notes the “needfulness” of the situation in which the community was in.¹ Vos highlights a series of matters that offer insight into the state of the relationship between the missionaries, the local San and the increasing numbers of settler-farmers in the Sak River region at the time. The circumstances of the mission were so dire that Vos had reverted to a defeatist attitude, assigning any further continuance of the mission to rest upon the Lord’s will. He raised two concerns in particular: the lack of sufficient water to tend the gardens due to the “great drought”, and the dangers posed to the residents of the mission by the neighbouring San communities; “... the fields are so dangerous that we dare not go half a mile from home without being aroused”; he continues, “... we are daily in danger, for they lay with their tribe not far from us.” Although an effort had been made among the local farmers to raise a collection of sheep intended to be given as a ‘peace-offering’ to the San and hopefully pacify the extent of the theft and hostility toward the mission and farmers alike, Vos states that “the woodmen² together have taken thousands of sheep and other cattle; Even for money we can get no sheep.”

Yet, in spite of the general pessimism of the report, Vos did not fail to enthuse that there were “some good Christians” living among them, who “thank God for what little they have – especially Martha and Marra who are an example in the community” and whom the missionaries had promised that they would not abandon, unless obliged to; “so our daily wishes are that the Lord would send a sufficient support here for without such it will be impossible to stand it much longer.” Unfortunately for Vos and the “good Christians” at the Sak River mission, the much needed support was not forthcoming and the mission was abandoned several months later.

¹ A. Vos, 15 January 1806, CWMA (Council for World Mission Archive, consulted at the UNISA Library and Archives) *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 29.

² A common variation of ‘Bushmen’ in descriptions of the time.

The Sak River mission's failure was an early setback for the LMS in South Africa. The pioneers of the Society's missionary endeavours at the Cape arrived in 1799, only seven years prior, with ambitions of fulfilling the 'great commission' commanded to them by Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Matthew. The early efforts of the LMS missionaries at this time are well documented and tend to focus on the two prominent figures of this period: Johannes Van der Kemp, who went on to establish the Bethelsdorp mission to the Khoikhoi in the Colony's eastern districts, and Johannes Kicherer, who travelled beyond the north-eastern frontier zone to establish a mission to the San.³ Thus, the mission to the San marked one of the two earliest evangelising fields of the LMS at the Cape.

What followed was a period of some thirty years of tenuous mission activity among the Cape San, characterised by several failed mission stations, infighting between missionaries, colonial processes that made the task untenable, and by the mid-1830s, the abandonment of the Society's last mission to what were by the time, mere remnants of the Cape San communities. This was largely due to the systematic and continuing use of Commandos during the early 19th century in the northern and eastern districts of the Colony, intended to suppress the San and put an end to the concerted resistance they had put up to the ever increasing encroachment of European farmers; a resistance that frequently took on the form of reprisal for the San, and which was matched by equally hostile motivations of revenge on the part of the settlers. The regular use of the Commando system by the settler population along the Colony's frontier boundaries resulted in dramatic social and economic upheaval for the Cape San. Such upheaval was well underway by the time of the arrival of the LMS. It continued well into the 19th century and as a result it must be taken into consideration when tracing the history of the encounters between the San and the missionaries.

It was some time before any missions to the San were attempted again following the failure of the Sak River mission. Eventually, such attempts were made, but these were also in time abandoned altogether. Although it is reasonable to suggest that there would have been numerous individual conversions, these did not occur to the same extent that was evident among the Khoikhoi of the south-western Cape or Namaqualand, or among the Griqua communities along the Orange River during the 1820s and 1830s.

³ For example see N. Penn "*The Forgotten Frontier*", K. Schoeman "*The Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819*", K. Schoeman "*J.J. Kicherer en die Vroeë Sending*" & I.H. Enklaar "*Life and Work of Dr. J. Th. Van der Kemp*".

In many ways, the ‘Christianising’ agenda of the LMS was intended to pacify the San and to assist in calming the state of hostility that existed between the San and the trekboers, and bring stability to the north-eastern frontier zone. Some thirty years of incessant Commando activity, which has become widely recognised as genocidal in its implementation, failed to put down San resistance to the advancing colonial frontier. In fact, the frontier had faltered in its advance since the 1770s; in regions such as the Roggeveld it had actually been forced to recede, and the instability of the north-eastern frontier remained a concern for the interchanging Dutch and British administrations at the Cape during the early 19th century. The missions were intended to play a crucial role in resolving this state of affairs.⁴

1.1) Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to contribute to the expanding literature on the San’s cultural adaptation and socio-economic transition in response to the colonial processes of land dispossession and water alienation during the course of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The proverbial windows through which these reactive adaptations will be observed are the mission stations of the London Missionary Society. The study aims to answer the question of why the LMS’ efforts to Christianise the San in and around a number of mission stations dotted along the north-eastern frontier zone amounted to very little. What were the contributing factors that resulted in this outcome? When compared to the ‘successes’ of the various mission societies among the Khoikhoi of the south-western Cape, the failures of the LMS and its missions to the San suggest the existence of some counter-productive cultural nuance, or nuances, that stood as an unassailable obstacle to the San’s intended conversion and ‘civilisation’.

A familiar argument forwarded in response to such a question, is that the Khoikhoi, a pastoralist society, possessed a cultural understanding of property and thus, were generally more acquiescent to the missionaries’ insistence on abandoning their nomadic way of life and adopting a sedentary means of existence – epitomised by the mission station. In contrast, the San are considered to have “had little sense of property – what need of property when everything you require is provided by

⁴ In 1798, the Moravians, based at Baviaans Kloof, were requested by Governor Dundas to establish a mission to the San in the north, at the government’s expense. This did not occur, but it does indicate the government’s intention to use missionaries in implementing their colonial policies; notably before the arrival of the LMS in 1799.

Nature...”⁵ Therefore the San were culturally stubborn and rebellious towards the mission project. Not only does this argument fail to acknowledge the individual conversions that did occur – though not necessarily to the same extent as was demonstrated by thousands of Cape Khoikhoi – but it also does not take into account the adaptation of San culture over time. This is because the argument referred to here falls within the wider, flawed line of reasoning that represents San culture as static. “Both geographic isolation and cultural conservatism” are frequently invoked in order to explain the perceived static nature of San culture.⁶ Owing to these unsubstantiated assumptions, the San have been represented as having been “socially and culturally uninterested in and unprepared for participation in independent pastoral economies.”⁷ The task of the missionary was therefore fated to fail, for if the San were ill-equipped to adopt pastoralism, a means of existence that still employs the nomadic mode, then the sedentary agriculturalism that underpinned the philosophy of the mission station, and was espoused by the LMS and Cape government alike, was simply far too ambitious in its naivety.

The records of the efforts of the LMS among the San of the north-eastern frontier zone tell a very different story; one of significant cultural adaptation in response to colonial pressures. An important arena in which these adaptations were facilitated was of course the LMS mission stations. By re-tracing the steps of the missionaries and the mission stations that they established to cater for the spiritual needs of the San over the thirty-four year long period of LMS-San interaction, a process of cultural adaptation becomes very apparent. It is the intention of this study to uncover the dynamics within and the pressures upon this process.

As such, the wider colonial context has been taken into consideration, in particular, in terms of its influences upon the LMS. In the years subsequent to the death of Johannes Van der Kemp, the Society’s mission efforts throughout the Colony were weakened by the dual forces of internal dissension and external antagonism. The figure of James Read looms large during the 1810s and his personal leadership style triggered a divide among the ranks of the LMS missionaries; between those who favoured a more Eurocentric, or colonially acceptable standard, and those who adopted a more syncretistic approach to their missionary labours. Widespread settler opposition to the Society was also compounded by the Governor during this time, Lord Charles Somerset, who appears to have

⁵ L. Van der Post & J. Taylor “*Testament to the Bushmen*” p. 15.

⁶ E.N. Wilmsen “*Land Filled with Flies*” p. 4.

⁷ Ibid.

harboured a dislike for the LMS and its instigative missionaries, including John Philip, who was despatched to the Cape with the duty of reforming the Society in 1819. Philip went on to become one of the most influential characters in the history of the interactions between the LMS and various local groups at the Cape during the early 19th century, including the Griquas and the San.

Upon completion, the study is expected to be located within the wider field of work relating to the San during the period under review. However, the study is as much a foray into South African mission history as it is a critical analysis of the extent of the influences of the LMS on the cultural processes of adaptation at work among the San. Thus, two branches of the South African historiographical tree require acknowledgement.

1.2) Historiography

In numerous works on the activities of the LMS in South Africa, the frustrations experienced by the Society in its proselytising ambitions directed towards the San have been noted, but they have often not been systematically deconstructed in order to assess the reasons behind the failures at the various LMS mission stations that were set up to minister to the San, from Blydevoorzicht Fontein and Sak River to Toornberg and Hephzibah, from Ramah, Konnah and Philippolis, to the ending of the San mission project with the release of Bushman School to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in 1833.

Karel Schoeman has arguably come closest to providing a detailed account of the thirty four years of LMS activity among the San, which he has published in a series of articles and in his recent work *“Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819”*. These works are a valuable contribution to the field of South African mission historiography generally. Schoeman employs his characteristic narrative mode in these works and he does so to good effect. Nonetheless, his research is rather disjointed in its assembly and presentation. While very useful in equipping those interested in the history of the interaction between the LMS and the San with numerous snapshots of individual stories and anecdotes, his work leaves much room for analysis of the socio-cultural and religious exchanges between the two, as well as the tracing and dismantling of a variety of historical processes that were at work at the time.

Indeed, the analytical treatment of the LMS missions to the San by various authors on South African mission history has often been fleeting. At various intervals in the existing literature the mission to the San has been assessed as a “stepping-stone to the peoples of the interior”⁸, referring to the LMS missions that were subsequently established to the Korana, Griqua and Tswana beyond the San mission field. Somewhat disparaging assessments have also been forwarded, suggesting that the San are to be regarded as having been the “Ishmaels of the Karoo” and as a result, beyond the reach of the mission endeavour.⁹ This has also been attributed by some authors to the San’s “extreme independence of spirit.”¹⁰ George Stow, in his work *“The Native Races of South Africa”*, asserted that with regards to the San and the work of the missionaries, they “could never appreciate the effort that had been made for their welfare, their wild life and its untrammelled freedom had too many fascinations for them.”¹¹ John Wright in *“The Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg”* suggested that the LMS’ effort to “bring the Gospel to the Bushman” was a “thankless task.”¹²

Such evaluations carry a sense of fate with them and in doing so suggest that the San – a ‘primitive’, hunter-gathering society, dispersed over a vast and arid landscape, practicing transhumance and fully dependent upon the land and its resources as they existed in their natural, unaltered state – were simply beyond ‘Christianisation’ and its accompanying existential baggage, which not only attempted, but demanded a cultural turn. The pervasiveness of assessments such as these correlate very much with the wider, general treatment of the demise of the Cape San as an independent, hunter-gathering society during the 19th century, neatly encapsulated in Theal’s analysis: “They [the San] could not adapt themselves to their new environment, they tried to live like their ancestors had lived, and therefore they were fated to perish. The wave of European colonisation was not to be stayed from rolling on by a few savages who stood in its course.”¹³ As Penn suggests, “the words have a comforting finality”, clearly evoking a sense of fate.¹⁴ The historical interaction between the San and the LMS tells a different story and it is this story that is the focus of this work.

Regarding the historical treatment of the San, recent work by a variety of historians has laid a convincing foundation for pursuing new interpretations. The collective effort that resulted in the

⁸ J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff *“Of Revelation and Revolution”* p. 45.

⁹ J. Du Plessis *“A History of Christian Missions in South Africa”* p. 106.

¹⁰ E. Palmer *“The Plains of Camdeboo”* p. 80.

¹¹ G. Stow *“The Native Races of South Africa”* p. 157.

¹² J. Wright *“Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg”* p. 30.

¹³ G.M. Theal *“History of South Africa”* Vol. 4 p. 82.

¹⁴ N. Penn *“Fated to Perish: The Destruction of the Cape San”* In P. Skotnes (ed.) *“Miscast: Negotiating the Presence of the Bushmen”* p. 82.

publication of *"The Bushmen of Southern Africa: A Foraging Society in Transition"* in 2000, provides a concise, yet valuable discussion that traces the transitions effected within the San communities of Southern Africa from the time of their earliest contacts with Europeans, as well as Khoikhoi and African herders, through to the late twentieth century.¹⁵ In addition, a figure at the forefront of re-evaluating San culture and its adaptation during the colonial era over the past decade has been Pippa Skotnes. Through her efforts to bring together a variety of scholars with a variety of interests – San rock art, linguistics, dress, myths, customs, etc. – her two volumes, *"Miscast"*, published in 1996, and *"Claim to the Country"*, published in 2007, have made significant contributions to the field. While consideration of the missionaries and the San received very little attention in *"The Bushmen of Southern Africa"*, several chapters in Skotnes' compositions do analyse the characteristics and consequences of the mission efforts among the San.¹⁶

Other historical works from the 1990s which have also done much to broach new questions pertaining to the 'static' myth and have forwarded compelling answers in response are Szalay's *"The San and the Colonisation of the Cape 1770-1879"* and Barnard's *"Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa"*.¹⁷ Barnard's work is intentionally ethnographic in orientation, but it is highly useful in guiding one through queries concerning San religion, kinship and transhumant mobility. Szalay, however, does devote an entire chapter to the efforts and influences of the mission project among the San. His approach sets these efforts well within the terrain of the wider colonial agenda to acculturate the San.

These more recent works should however, not detract from significant earlier works, most notably that of Schapera.¹⁸ *"The Khoisan Peoples of Southern Africa"* published in 1930, still stands as one of the most exhaustive studies of the Khoikhoi and San in South African historiography. With regards to the San, the work offers useful insight into their social organisation, habits and customs, religion and magic, and economic and political life. Furthermore, Schapera drew extensively from the Bleek and Lloyd archive for crucial material pertaining to the Cape San or /Xam. The collection

¹⁵ A. Smith et. al *"The Bushmen of Southern Africa: A Foraging Society in Transition"* David Philip & Ohio University Press, Cape Town and Athens, 2000.

¹⁶ See for example N. Penn *"Civilising the San: The First Mission to the Cape San, 1791-1806"* In P. Skotnes (ed.) *"Claim to the Country"* & D. Chidester *"Bushman Religion: Open, Closed and New Frontiers"* In P. Skotnes (ed.) *"Miscast"*.

¹⁷ M. Szalay *"The San and the Colonisation of the Cape 1770-1879: Conflict, Incorporation, Acculturation"* Rüdiger Köppe, Köln, 1995 & A. Barnard *"Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples"* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1992.

¹⁸ I. Schapera *"The Khoisan Peoples of Southern Africa"* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1930.

of /Xam folklore, customs and beliefs, as well as personal histories recorded by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd during the 1870s, which runs to 12 000 pages, “is the only substantial record ever to have been written down verbatim in a Bushman language in South Africa.”¹⁹ Housed in the Jagger Library at the University of Cape Town, the collection contains a wealth of material, much of which is still inaccessible to the wider public, in spite of recent efforts by the likes of Pippa Skotnes and her “*Claim to the Country*”.

In terms of the other relevant strand of South African historiography, missions and missionaries, both are well developed as a critical field of study, particularly during the period under consideration. Missionary activity during the 19th century has received the overwhelming share of attention in South African historical writing compared with earlier or later periods. As Southey suggests, this certainly has much to do with “the importance of missionary sources for historians who work on pre-industrial African societies.”²⁰ This is indeed the methodological basis for this study.

Mission history in general has received new impetus in recent years, spurred on by the likes of Norman Etherington and of course, the Comaroffs. In particular, a significant new trend in international mission historiography has developed since the 1980s, which has granted increasing attention to both the cultural implications of mission work, and how these implications informed the colonial process. In contrast to earlier works such as Dora Taylor’s “*The Role of Missionaries in Conquest*”, which cast the missionaries as agents of colonialism and conquest, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed the development of a growing recognition of African appropriation of Christianity in response to colonial pressures.²¹ The influences of Christian symbolism upon African societies caught up within the changing social and cultural context of the 19th century have begun to inform South African historical writing on missions.

Rather than viewing African communities as the ‘duped’ converts of Christianity, which only served to lay the foundation upon which colonialism was built – colonising the consciousness before colonising the land – recent interpretations have attempted to uncover African responses to the missions and missionaries. Pre-industrial African societies were certainly not oblivious to the potential consequences of the colonial forces of dispossession and marginalisation unfolding during

¹⁹ J.C. Hollmann “*Customs and Beliefs of the /Xam Bushmen*” p. xiii.

²⁰ N. Southey “*Historians and Religion: The Treatment of Christianity in South African Historiography*” Conf. Paper, p.

1

²¹ J. Du Bruyn “*Missionaries in South African Historical Writing*” Conf. Paper, p. 2.

the early 19th century for their future cultural integrity and political independence. Mission history is arguably so well developed in South African historiography because there is a general recognition that the mission societies were ‘blessed’ with scores of willing converts, or at least residents. Questions pertaining to why this was the case have found their rightful place within the wider sphere of South African mission historiography in recent times.

With regards to the London Missionary Society, South African mission historiography has produced many works, some fairly old, some relatively new, which have together affirmed that “no other society was more important in the 19th century, or as controversial.”²² Ranging from the polemical to the hagiographic, and from those works that were published at the time that the LMS was most active in South Africa to very recent research, the LMS has a firm footing in South African mission historiography. Founded in 1795, the LMS endeavoured to take “the Glorious Gospel of the blessed God to the heathen.”²³ Some of the most prominent historical figures of the early 19th century Cape were indeed missionaries of the LMS, including the likes of Johannes van der Kemp, James Read and John Philip.

The ‘brand’ of Christianity espoused by the LMS was certainly less pious than that of other mission societies, in particular the Moravians, who were the only mission society to arrive in South Africa earlier than the LMS. While the efforts of Van der Kemp and Read should perhaps be regarded as exempt from this assertion (although pioneers in positioning the LMS as a political lobbyist by insisting on what became the highly unpopular ‘Black Circuit’ of 1812) by 1820 and the appointment of John Philip as the superintendent of the Society at the Cape, the LMS missionaries became increasingly involved in political processes, playing an “important role in shaping the social history of southern Africa during the 19th century.”²⁴ This was particularly true for the San communities of the north-eastern frontier zone.

1.3) Methodology

²² C. Saunders “Looking Back: 170 Years of Historical Writing on the LMS in South Africa” In J.W. De Gruchy (ed.) *“The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa”* p. 7.

²³ J.W. De Gruchy “Remembering a Legacy” In J.W. De Gruchy (ed.) *“The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa”* p. 1.

²⁴ Ibid. See also A.N. Porter “Religion versus Empire?” p.x. 80-81.

This study draws upon both primary and secondary sources. With regards to the primary research material, the Council for World Mission Archive (CWMA) housed at UNISA in Pretoria, has proven invaluable. The archive contains a wide variety of LMS records, ranging from official minutes, to personal letters of correspondence, as well as journals. The painstaking task of sifting through the countless microfiche files searching for relevant information, combined with the equally taxing task of transcribing what are often poorly hand-written texts, was made all the more enjoyable by the sheer wealth of information contained in the collection.

It became apparent early on that the best source of relevant records was the collection of private and official letters of correspondence written by the resident missionaries at the various San mission stations. Their first-hand descriptions of the San whom they encountered and ministered to provide crucial insight into the ways the San were responding and adapting to the dynamics of the advancing frontier. It hopefully goes without saying, although the qualification will be made nonetheless, that it is recognised that the descriptions contained within these letters are descriptions written through European ‘eyes’ and they are treated with the requisite scepticism.

In order to contextualise the experiences and accounts of the LMS missionaries and their encounters with the San communities of the north-eastern frontier zone during the early 19th century, the reports, orders, letters and journals contained within the British Parliamentary Papers have also been drawn upon extensively. These Papers contain a wealth of information pertaining to the key political processes and actors involved in directing the relations between the Colony and the San during the period under review. In addition, a variety of contemporary accounts and descriptions have been used. The travel accounts of Barrow, Somerville, Lichtenstein, Burchell, Campbell and Thompson contain compelling and valuable descriptions of the physical landscape, the mission stations, the missionaries and the San with whom they came into contact. Other first hand accounts were also found in rather surprising places. For example, the work by S.H. Pellissier “*J.P. Pellissier van Bethulie*” – the French Protestant missionary that assumed the leadership of Bushman Station in 1833 – contains numerous letters written by the LMS missionaries who administered the mission prior to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, who renamed it Bethulie. Of course, John Philip’s “*Researches in South Africa*” has also proven to be an indispensable resource. Due to the “definite increase in the number of historical studies on missionaries” since the 1980s in South Africa, an abundance of secondary works on mission history generally, and on mission history in the early 19th century Cape specifically, have contributed to this study.

Lastly, a note must be made on one of the central organising concepts of this study, the 'frontier'. Perhaps one of the most straightforward definitions of a 'frontier' is that it is a "zone of interaction among peoples practicing different cultures."²⁵ This definition does, however, lead on to other questions pertaining to 'culture', arguably complicating the matter rather than simplifying it. Nonetheless, the frontier is indeed a zone of interaction within which participating groups – both indigenous and immigrant – negotiate and forge socio-economic and political relations, often, but not solely, through violence. As such, further questions concerning power are raised. Which group guides the forging and entrenchment of these relations? Evidently the one which has and exercises more power.

Widely regarded as the father of the frontier hypothesis, American historian Frederick Jackson Turner argued in a paper published in 1893 that "the frontier experience shaped both the American character and American institutions."²⁶ Since then, his frontier theory has been applied to other frontier zones in other parts of the world, and the societies which were subsequently engendered. This hypothesis has also been employed by South African historians in their endeavour to trace the origins of apartheid. Liberal historians of the mid-20th century placed emphasis on the racial prejudices exhibited by Afrikaners on the Cape's eastern frontier during the early 19th century as the foundational roots of 20th century racial segregation. Nigel Worden and others have since suggested that this argument is flawed, as "perceptions of white racial superiority were apparent from the earliest colonial encounters of the Dutch and other European settlers with Khoikhoi pastoralists at the Cape."²⁷

The first major objection to the emphasis placed upon the frontier by South African historians – the frontier tradition – came from Martin Legassick. In a highly influential paper, "*The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography*", Legassick rocked the historical fraternity by calling into question the basic premises of the 'frontier tradition'.²⁸ He also became widely held to have called for the abandonment of the 'frontier' altogether (as opposed to the 'frontier tradition').²⁹ When one

²⁵ R. Elphick "Africans and the Christian Campaign in Southern Africa" In H. Lamar & L. Thompson (eds.) "*The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared*" p. 270.

²⁶ See the discussion by H. Lamar & L. Thompson "*Comparative Frontier History*" In H. Lamar & L. Thompson (eds.) "*The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared*" p.x. 4-5.

²⁷ See the discussion by N. Worden "*The Making of Modern South Africa*" p. 66.

²⁸ M. Legassick "*The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography*" In S. Marks & A. Atmore (eds.) "*Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*".

²⁹ See for example R. Elphick & H. Giliomee: "In 1970 Martin Legassick... rejected the "frontier tradition" arguing that racism was not intensified on the frontier. His alternative view, subsequently taken up by a generation of revisionist

considers Legassick's argument in his paper, this is evidently a misrepresentation. He argued that "It was not, therefore, the frontier, seen as a social system distinct and isolated from a parent society, which produced a new, or even intensified an old, pattern of racial relationships... The pattern of relationships established in the 18th century Cape must be seen in the light of the formation of the Cape colonist as a whole, the form of his inheritance from Europe, and the exigencies of the situation he had to face."³⁰ Legassick was suggesting that rather than interpreting and representing the 'frontier' in isolation, historians must recognise that the frontier was a product of the parent society, namely the Cape Colony proper, which in turn was a product of European settlers with European mindsets.

Therefore, the flaws within the 'frontier tradition' concerning the determining influences upon South Africa's 20th century racial prejudices and their relation to the context of the 19th century eastern Cape frontier do not detract from the significance of the frontier as an organising concept within the north-eastern Cape context during the period under consideration. Indeed, the goal here is entirely different. The use of the 'frontier' in this study is in order to assess the extent and nature of the historical processes that had been unfolding for several decades prior to the arrival of the LMS and the initiation of mission activity among the San, and which continued to unfold well into the 19th century. These processes were marked by settler encroachment, which provoked indigenous resistance and culminated in conflict. In time, those indigenous communities that had maintained a degree of independence by retreating further into the Cape interior in order to escape the debilitating effects of the colonial frontier were forced into subservience due to the consolidation and entrenchment of settler power.

Another significant contribution made to South African historiography by Legassick stemmed from his unpublished PhD thesis, "The Griqua, the Sotho-Tswana and the Missionaries, 1780-1840: The Politics of a Frontier Zone'. He highlighted the important colonial processes that unfolded along the northern and north-eastern frontiers, which had been largely neglected due to the theretofore emphasis placed upon the eastern frontier. The title of his thesis clearly demonstrates that he himself did not abandon the frontier as an organising concept. Furthermore, those geographical areas of the

historians, many of them Marxists, emphasised the role of post-1867 industrial capitalism, and by implication at least, de-emphasised the formative influence of the pre-industrial period" (*The Shaping of South African Society* p. 522).

³⁰ M. Legassick "The Frontier Tradition in South African Historiography" In S. Marks & A. Atmore (eds.) *Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa* p.x. 67-68. See also M. Legassick "The State, Racism and the Rise of Capitalism in the Nineteenth Century Cape Colony" In *South African Historical Journal*, 28, 1993, p. 331.

northern frontier which were excluded from Legassick's work, as well as the earlier period, 1700-1780, have been researched by Nigel Penn. His PhD thesis, "The Northern Cape Frontier Zone, 1700-1815" also clearly evokes the usage of the frontier zone as an important "zone of interaction" around and through which settler-indigenous relations were negotiated and consolidated.

The concept of the 'frontier' has also been deconstructed further in order to facilitate an understanding of its fluctuating nature, which is most useful in the context of the north-eastern interior during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. To account for the complexities of the frontier zone, a distinction between an 'open' and a 'closed' frontier has been made. An open frontier zone is characterised by an irregular balance of power between those societies that are competing for dominance, while the emergence of a closed frontier zone signals that one of the groups has achieved ascendancy over the rest.³¹ This theoretical deconstruction of the 'frontier zone' proves helpful when weighing up the most important events or sub-processes that result in the scales of power tipping toward one of the competing societies. Indeed, the initiation of mission activities by the LMS among the San along the north-eastern frontier occurred at a time when the frontier was 'open', although it arguably had begun to 'close'. The question is whether or not the 'opening' and 'closing' effects of the frontier during the early 19th century had any substantial influence upon the San's receptivity, or lack thereof, to the Society's missionaries and the Gospel.

In order to represent the period under review (1790 to 1833) in a chronological means, while tracing the ebbs and flows of the activities of the LMS among the San, this study has been arranged according to three distinct phases: firstly, from 1790 to 1806, which considers the arrival of the LMS at the Cape and the establishment of the first San mission stations; secondly, from 1806 to 1820, during which time the LMS initiated two new missions to the San; and thirdly, 1820-1833, which traces the founding of Philippolis and the influence of Griqua political consolidation upon the long term viability of the San mission project; as well as the short-lived Bushman Station, released to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in 1833, thus bringing to an end the interactions between the LMS and the San along the Cape's north-eastern frontier during the early 19th century. Onward to the task.

³¹ See the discussion by H. Giliomee "Processes in the Development of the Southern African Frontier" In H. Lamar & L. Thompson (eds.) *The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared* p.x. 76-119.

2) 'The First Steps': Gifts & Missions, 1790-1806

"Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce."

Jeremiah 29:5

Before a study of the London Missionary Society's efforts among the Cape San communities of the north-eastern frontier zone can be effectively dismantled, it is first necessary to attempt to clarify who exactly the Cape San were by reflecting on their political, cultural and religious frameworks. Secondly, it is also necessary to consider the colonially inspired upheavals that had thrown San culture into flux during the 18th century and which had led to the incidents of San resistance referred to, as well as the steady erosion of the mechanisms necessary for San independence. Thirdly, a concise, yet useful, comparison of the notable differences between San and Khoikhoi responses to Christian evangelisation will be considered. Such a comparison offers insight into why the San are perceived to have been largely dismissive of the mission project and unreceptive to the Gospel message. Finally, an assessment of the extent of mission activity underway at the Cape at the time of the arrival of the LMS pioneers and the first mission to the San will be made. This will be done in order to lay the foundation upon which an understanding of the missionaries' spiritual and practical intentions in attempting to proselytise the San can be based, as well as to acknowledge the philosophical underpinnings of the 'mission station' as the physical space in which the processes of Christian instruction and colonial acculturation were expected to occur.

2.1) The /Xam: Hunters & Gatherers in a Frontier Zone

As mentioned, prior to any analysis of the efforts of the LMS among the San communities of the north-eastern frontier zone being adequately attended to, and compared to those efforts undertaken among the Khoikhoi of the south-western Cape and Namaqualand, an evaluation of who the San were is a necessary prerequisite. Disagreements pertaining to the 'definitive' differences between the San and the Khoikhoi remain a largely anthropological deliberation; and yet, they do have a significant role to play in the historical interpretation of early Cape colonial encounters between the indigenous and settler communities, and most certainly within the 'mission' dimension of these encounters, which will be demonstrated in due course. While the utilisation of the popular portmanteau 'Khoisan' would effectively avoid the potential dilemma of becoming bogged down in

the San-Khoikhoi dichotomy debate, its usage would be inappropriate as the mission activities that are intended to be investigated were specifically directed towards the San.

The geographical region in which the history of the interaction between the LMS and the San outplayed itself was populated in general by /Xam Bushmen.¹ Barnard notes that the first 'Bushman' with whom the European imagination had contact "was not a Bushman of the Kalahari."² He contends that those 'Bushmen' which were first encountered by Europeans – whether by European explorers, such as Barrow and Lichtenstein, or by missionaries, such as Kicherer and Campbell – were Cape Bushmen. Yet, it cannot be assumed that all Cape San were /Xam. There were other identifiable hunter-gatherer groups in the north-eastern frontier zone during the late 18th and early 19th centuries.³

Furthermore, the term used to refer to those inhabitants of the Cape that did not possess cattle in the records during late 17th century, the period of initial contact between the Europeans and the Cape's hunter-gatherers, is 'Soaqua'. Often used to identify "robbers and thieves", Parkington suggests that the terms 'Soaqua' and 'San' more than likely stem from the same root, *soa* or *sa*, meaning to gather.⁴ The term San, which has become widely recognised in twentieth century historiography, is often regarded as having been the Khoikhoi term for the 'Bushmen' or 'foragers'. A cloud of uncertainty similar to that characteristic of the debate pertaining to the San-Khoikhoi dichotomy also attends the discussion of who the first hunter-gatherers encountered by the Europeans at the Cape were.

The generic appellation frequently put forward with regards to the differences between the San and the other prominent indigenous population group with whom the Europeans came into contact with at the Cape, the Khoikhoi; is that the San were nomadic, hunter-gatherers, while the Khoikhoi, although also nomadic, herded cattle and other livestock. However, attempts at cementing a neat and clearly definable categorisation of the San and Khoikhoi have proven difficult, dating back to the

¹ Although culturally extinct, the /Xam are one of the most prominent 'Bushmen' ethnicities in South African historiography and literature, very much owing to the study of their folklore conducted by Wilhelm Bleek and Lucy Lloyd during the 1870s in Cape Town. Nonetheless, little is known of /Xam political organisation and kinship.

² A. Barnard "Hunters and Herders of Southern Africa: A Comparative Ethnography of the Khoisan Peoples" p. 77.

³ See the discussion by N. Penn "The Orange River Frontier Zone, c. 1700-1805" In A. Smith (ed.) "Einiqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier" Ch. 2.

⁴ J. Parkington "Soaqua and Bushmen: Hunters and Robbers" In C. Schrire (ed.) "Past and Present in Hunter Gatherer Studies" p. 158.

earliest encounters between these indigenous communities and the European explorers and settlers.⁵ Such attempts have perhaps proven so difficult, as they have failed to take into account the adaptation of San culture over time in response to contacts with herding and farming communities, and in particular, in response to colonial encroachment and pressures.⁶ In spite of Theal's assessment, which reinforced the 'Bushmen' image that has since become so prevalent in a variety of literature and film, that is, of a static, pristine hunter-gathering culture, living "like their ancestors lived", there is sufficient historical evidence that points towards cultural change and adaptation over time.⁷ This will become particularly apparent when the activities of the LMS among the San are considered in greater detail.

Nonetheless the term 'Bushmen' remains problematic. For the period under review, namely the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the term should not be regarded as synonymous with a distinct ethnic group with its own cultural identity, but rather as indicative of the emergence of "a variety of people, of all colours and creeds, who chose" or were forced "to subsist in the bush", including runaway slaves, colonial vagabonds or *drosters*, and Khoikhoi who had been dispossessed of cattle, but who had not been bonded to labour on the colonial farms.⁸ This point was commented on as early as 1790 by Francois Le Vaillant. In his account of his travels through the Cape interior, Le Vaillant noted that while "Boshmen is a name composed of two Dutch words, which signify bush-men, or men of the woods", he also confirmed that there are 'Boshmen' who "far from being a distinct species ... are only a promiscuous assemblage of mulattoes, negroes and mestizos, of every species, and sometimes of Hottentots and Basters."⁹

Yet, it must be stressed that the 'San' were indeed a distinct ethno-cultural group that also subsisted on hunting and gathering. The implication is that the terms "Bosjesmen", "Bushesmen", "Woodmen" and "Boschesmen", which are to be found in the numerous travel writings of the era, should not be

⁵ P. Jolly "Between the Lines: Some Remarks on Bushman Ethnicity" In P. Skotnes (ed.) "Miscast" p.x. 197-209. See also the discussion by S. Marks "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the 17th and 18th Centuries" In *Journal of African History*, 13, 1972.

⁶ See A. Smith "On Becoming Herders: Khoikhoi and San Ethnicity in Southern Africa" In *African Studies*, 49, 1990.

⁷ I. Glenn "The Bushman in Early South African Literature" In P. Skotnes (ed.) "Miscast" p.x. 41-49.

⁸ See the discussion by P. Jolly "Between the Lines: Some Remarks on Bushman Ethnicity" In P. Skotnes (ed.) "Miscast" p. 209; S. Marks "Khoisan Resistance to the Dutch in the 17th and 18th Centuries"; S. Newton-King "The Enemy Within the Struggle for Ascendancy on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1800" p. 53; & R. Elphick "Khoikhoi and the Founding of White South Africa" p.x. 23-24.

⁹ F. Le Vaillant "Voyage" Vol II, pp. 343-344, 1790. See also the discussion by I. Glenn "The Bushman in Early South African Literature" In P. Skotnes (ed.) "Miscast" p. 41.

considered as having been tantamount to the San.¹⁰ The territories associated with and beyond the colonial frontier during the late 18th and early 19th centuries were home to an amalgam of hybrid communities, including ‘Bastaards’, ‘Bastaard-Hottentots’, dispossessed Khoikhoi, deserting slaves, Namaqua, Korana, as well as the San, all subsisting off the often-times meagre resources of the land.

Contemporary observations of ‘Bushmen’ by explorers, hunters and missionaries must be considered in this light. Though, as mentioned, this should not detract from the unique ethno-cultural integrity of the Cape San. In recounting his first-hand encounters with the “Bosjesmans”, Lichtenstein observed that “They are, and ever have been, a distinct people, having their own peculiar language, and their own peculiar customs”, he continues, “if the terms *language* and *customs* can be applied to people upon the very lowest step in the order of civilisation.”¹¹ His assessment raises two crucial points: firstly, in spite of the increasing numbers of ‘mixed-race’ communities along the fringes of the Colony during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there did exist a contemporary appreciation for a distinct group of inhabitants, who subsisted off the ‘bush’ and who had done so for an extended period of time, that is, prior to the emergence of hybrid communities as a result of colonial processes; secondly, his dismissive thoughts with regards to the San’s language and customs, portrayed as inapplicable to a people so ‘primitive’, were widely held in the Cape at the time, especially among the outlying settler population.

Settler contempt for the San in the outlying districts of the Cape Colony was certainly first and foremost motivated by the continuing cycle of stock theft and violence so characteristic of the north-eastern frontier zone during the late 18th century. However, contemporaneous European travellers’ accounts of the San, which stressed their so-called lack of social organisation, government and property, did not dissuade the colonial authorities from attempting more amicable means to placate the extent of hostility between the frontier settlers and the San. While the adoption of more conciliatory measures to pacify the San and quell the incessant conflict along the north-eastern frontier is often associated with the British administration of 1796-1802, the Dutch authorities, under the auspices of the VOC, had attempted on several previous occasions to recall settlers beyond the colonial boundary and discourage the Commandos from carrying out excessive reprisals for stock

¹⁰ See for instance S. Newton-King “*Masters and Servants on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1803*” p.x 60-62. The distinction between the terms ‘Bushmen’ and ‘Hottentots’, although often regarded as having been descriptive of ‘San’ and ‘Khoikhoi’ respectively, is haphazard in the contemporary late 18th and early 19th centuries’ records.

¹¹ H. Lichtenstein “*Travels in Southern Africa*” Vol. 1, p. 143.

theft or in response to San depredations.¹² Although these attempts did not achieve the desired end of bringing about “peace with the native tribes on the frontier”, they are worth noting, as they point towards efforts prior to the first period of British administration that sought to peaceably resolve the state of hostility along the frontier, thus establishing a precedent for subsequent, similar efforts undertaken by the British, and in particular, Lord Macartney.¹³

Nonetheless, the advent of the first British occupation of the Cape did result in a greater appreciation for the plight of the San, along with other frontier communities, as a result of colonial encroachment, and especially because of the excessive violence of the Commando system. A key figure who influenced both the British colonial authorities and the British public alike was John Barrow.¹⁴ Barrow, who toured the Cape interior in 1797 and 1798, was a close friend of Lord Macartney and his first-hand experiences of the frontier most certainly provided the impetus for Lord Macartney’s Proclamation of 1798 concerning the very serious need for efforts to promote peace with the San along the northern fringes of the colonial boundary.¹⁵

Barrow’s journey northwards from the Graaf-Reinet district took him across the Sneeuwberg and along the course of the Seekoei River. His observations of the “Country of the Bosjesmens” provides useful insight into the extent to which trekboer advances and the Commando system had worked together over an extended period of time to undermine the San’s access to the basic means of their survival. He observed that “they neither cultivate the ground nor breed cattle, but subsist in part, on the natural produce of their country.”¹⁶ Indeed, the most distinguishing socio-cultural characteristic of the San was their nomadic, hunter-gathering lifestyle. With their day to day way of life being so inextricably linked to the land, significant disruption to the San’s socio-cultural framework, in addition to their economic means of existence, was inevitable as the colonial frontier steadily

¹² British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 1, Notes of Mr. Borchers, relative to the past and present Condition of the Hottentots and other Natives of South Africa, p.x. 313-315.

¹³ Lord Macartney, or the Earl of Macartney, fulfilled the office of Governor of the Cape between 23 May 1797 and 22 November 1798. He succeeded J.H. Craig and was replaced by Sir Francis Dundas.

¹⁴ Barrow’s descriptions of the Cape, notably with regards to its potential strategic importance to Britain and the nature of relations between the various social groups, are well documented. He was highly critical of the Dutch settlers and their treatment of the indigenous inhabitants both within and beyond the Colony. See M. Streak “*The Afrikaner as Viewed by the English, 1795-1854*” Ch. 1 & N. Penn “*Mapping the Cape: John Barrow and the First British Occupation of the Colony, 1795-1803*.”

¹⁵ Barrow noted that the motivation behind his journey through the territory north of the Sneeuwberg, populated by known San communities that had been in conflict with the Graaf-Reinet farmers, was “to bring about a conversation with some of the chiefs of this people; to try if, by presents and a lenient conduct, they could be prevailed upon to quit their present wild and marauding way of life.” J. Barrow “*Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*” p. 237. See also the discussion by N. Penn “*Mapping the Cape: John Barrow and the First British Occupation of the Colony, 1795-1803*” p.x. 31-32.

¹⁶ J. Barrow “*Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*” p. 234.

advanced further and further beyond the immediate environs of the south-western Cape coastal belt and by the mid-18th century began to impact increasingly upon the San's traditional territory and means of existence.

The year 1770 in particular proved to be significant within this prolonged process of colonial advance, as it was at that time that the frontier reached a crucial geographical point, namely the interior escarpment.¹⁷ This escarpment was fundamental to the transhumance of the San. It marked the division between the winter and summer rainfall patterns that occurs along its length and breadth, in the form of the Hantam, Roggeveld and Nieuweveld mountain ranges. The north-eastern interior, beyond the escarpment is a summer rainfall region, while to the west of these mountain ranges is a winter rainfall region.

By practicing transhumance from one region to the other during the changing seasons, the San were able to follow the year-round patterns of rainfall and exploit the natural resources that this afforded them, especially as the herds of game they hunted and depended upon for survival would have followed the same seasonal patterns. As trekboer encroachment advanced beyond the south-western Cape into the Bokkeveld and still further to the interior escarpment, so the San were forced to compete for the resources that were vital to their existence, including land, water and game. In time, any prospects of retreating further inland were simply not feasible due to the presence of the Sotho-Tswana to the north, and the Xhosa to the east.

During the course of the late 18th century, the San's traditional territory was systematically carved up and privatised by the trekboers. However, pressure on the land, its resources and scarce water supplies, was not only forthcoming from the trekboers. Due to the increasing colonial pressures that were being placed upon the Khoikhoi of Namaqualand by the steady advance of stock-farmers to the north of the Colony, many were forced to enter Bushmanland and in turn placed mounting pressure upon the territory of the San from the west. The dire circumstances in which the San found themselves, in spite of the protracted and concerted resistance to colonial encroachment they had maintained for over thirty years, is testified to in the account of a San whom Barrow encountered in the service of a farmer in the Sneeu Berg. The "wild man" in question "represented the condition of his countrymen as truly deplorable... that they frequently beheld their wives and children perishing

¹⁷ See the discussion by N. Penn "*The Forgotten Frontier*" p.x. 19-21 & J. Parkington "*Soaqua and Bushmen: Hunters and Robbers*" In C. Schrire (ed.) "*Past and Present in Hunter Gatherer Studies*" p. 155.

with hunger, without being able to give them any relief... they knew themselves to be hated by all mankind, and that every nation around them was an enemy planning their destruction.”¹⁸

While many San communities were forced to retreat further inland, into the drier regions of the Cape interior, between the mountain belt of the Roggeveld, Nieuweveld and Sneeuwberg in the south and the Middle Orange River plains to the north, the regions of the Cape in which they were accustomed to subsisting prior to the territorial pressures of the trekboers provided sufficient resources for their hunting and gathering means of existence. Indeed, it was these resources that attracted the trekboers into the traditional domains of the San and resulted in the competition for access and survival that became characterised by mutual antagonism and ultimately violent and prolonged conflict. For example, Barrow testified to the appeal of the Sneeuwberg to the farmers of Graaf-Reinet, in spite of the depredations of the San, which caused the farmer to live “in a state of perpetual personal danger”.¹⁹ Among the “temptations” of the Sneeuwberg was its reputation for being “the best nursery for sheep in the whole colony”. Farmers in the Sneeuwberg were said to have on average no fewer than three to four thousand sheep, which were also said to be “superior to those of the other districts both in size and condition.”²⁰

The certain destruction that the regular trekboer encroachment upon the traditional transhumant territory of the San would have entailed was clearly not lost on the San, confirmed by their concerted resistance to the advance of the Colony. The detrimental ramifications of these colonial intrusions upon their economic means of existence are apparent. By first gaining access to frontier water sources, and then thereafter consolidating their possession of those water sources, frontier farmers undermined any prospects for the future subsistence of hunting and gathering communities within the immediate environs. The San were effectively cut off from accessing vital supplies of water throughout the length and breadth of the frontier zone. The hunting of game and the grazing of cattle that accompanied the settlement of the trekboers in the interior also served to destabilise the San’s economic base of survival. However, in addition, the alienation of frontier resources, including land, water and game, also worked together to disrupt San “patterns of life” and in effect, dramatically weakened their socio-cultural framework.²¹

¹⁸ J. Barrow “*Travels into the Interior of Southern Africa*” p. 241.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 249.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ L. Guelke & R. Shell “Landscape of Conquest: Frontier Water Alienation and Khoikhoi Strategies of Survival, 1652-1780” In *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 18, 1992, p.x. 803-804.

Frontier water alienation would have become even more significant from 1800 onwards, as many districts of the Colony suffered an “unprecedented drought”.²² The effects of this drought were testified to by William Somerville, one half of the Somerville-Truter expedition to the territory north of the Orange River between 1799 and 1802. The task assigned to this expedition was to explore the country north of the Orange River and ascertain whether or not trade with the inhabitants of the region could be affected. The key commodity within this proposed trade was to be cattle. This was due to the extensive loss of cattle the Colony had suffered as a result of the drought referred to, as well as rampant cattle theft in the eastern extremities of the Colony due to renewed hostilities between the settlers and the Xhosa and Khoikhoi in Graaf-Reinet district, culminating in the advent of the Third Frontier War.²³

During the course of the journey, Somerville continued to encounter first hand the debilitating effects of the drought upon the outlying farming communities. On the 12th of October 1801, he noted that “The three districts of the Little, Middle and Under Roggeveldt have not escaped from the disasters which were so severely felt in other parts” of the Colony. As sources of water that had up until the time been considered permanent and reliable began to dry up, so the intensity of the competition for survival between the San and the settlers along the northern fringes of the Colony would have intensified. If ever the San were to feel the real effects of the limitations placed upon their traditional transhumant patterns by colonial encroachments, it was certainly during this period of extended drought in the very early years of the 19th century.

Such was the extent of the drought, that the normally dry region north of the Roggeveld mountains – which had become increasingly populated with retreating San, Khoikhoi and other mixed-race communities, withdrawing in response to the advances of the trekboers – was described by Somerville as “barren and desolate” having “the appearance of an exhausted stone quarry”. The prospects for viable subsistence in the region were dire. However, Somerville also commented that the country north of the Roggeveld “offers but few spots that would tempt a European settler”, therefore offering those retreating communities that could eke out an existence from the minimal resources a degree of protection from further trekboer incursions.

²² E. Bradlow & F. Bradlow (eds.) *William Somerville's Narrative of His Journeys to the Eastern Cape Frontier and to Lattakoe, 1799-1802*. p. 48.

²³ *Ibid.* p.x. 49-51.

Yet, the most significant aspect of the Somerville-Truter expedition is that it was the first concerted, government sanctioned effort on the part of the British administration at the Cape to establish trading relations with the inhabitants north of the Orange River. In spite of the “aridity and unproductiveness” of the region that lay between the interior escarpment and the Orange River valley and its surrounding plains, these early, official attempts to reach beyond the dry, middle ground between the two were to set in motion a gradual process of northern colonial progression. Indeed, within this process, the “few spots that would tempt a European settler” which Somerville referred to, would become key sites around which the frontier’s northern movement would be consolidated.

In keeping with what has been suggested thus far, the rapid undermining of San independence and their collective means of subsistence along the northern frontier zone during the late 18th century contributed to socio-economic upheaval on a significant scale. By the time of the arrival of the LMS, the San communities of the northern frontier zone were reeling from the debilitating effects of thirty years of concerted resistance to trekboer encroachment. Thousands had been killed by the Commandos. Many would have lost family relatives, which in light of the “outstanding importance” of the family “in their social and economic life”, must have significantly undermined the integrity of the San’s cultural organisation.²⁴ Furthermore, within the context of the open frontier – the zone of interaction in which various dispersed groups of San first encountered the missionaries – amendments to their mythical and religious frameworks must have occurred in step with socio-cultural and economic adaptations (Indeed, the notable failures and relative successes of the LMS among the San must be located within the changing context of the frontier).

Contemporary accounts of the San at the Cape tended to treat San religious beliefs in a disparaging light. More often than not they were considered to have no notion of religion whatsoever.²⁵ For example, Somerville asserted that “No religious sentiments could be fairly expected from this truly wretched race.”²⁶ Likewise, Sparman, who toured the Cape interior between 1772 and 1776 stated that the San “are not sensible of the existence of any being who is origin and ruler of all things” and he expressed his doubt “whether anybody will ever trouble themselves with the conversion of these

²⁴ I. Schapera “*The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa*” p. 81.

²⁵ A. Smith, et. al “*The Bushmen of Southern Africa: A Foraging Society in Transition*” p. 38.

²⁶ E. Bradlow & F. Bradlow (eds.) *William Somerville’s Narrative of His Journeys to the Eastern Cape Frontier and to Lattakoe, 1799-1802.* p. 65.

plain honest people, unless it should appear to have more connexion than it seems to have at present with political advantages.”²⁷

These disparaging conclusions, based on the San’s perceived lack of religion, found a home among a wider literature that portrayed the San in increasingly racist overtones during the late 18th century and onwards. A people without religion were regarded as being less than human in the Calvinist charged, religious framework of the outlying Dutch communities at the Cape. It is with regards to the religious proclivities of the frontier farmers that Legassick’s ‘parent society’ argument becomes most relevant.

Indeed, the Reformed tradition became the leading movement within wider European Protestantism in Britain, the Netherlands, and some parts of Germany, from the mid-16th century onwards.²⁸ The overwhelming majority of Cape settlers during the VOC period, as well as during the post-1806 British era, came from these nations. The Reformed doctrine of predestination did not bode well for the indigenous communities of the Cape Colony generally, and for the San specifically. Chidester suggests that the denial of San religion “in effect negated their humanity... casting them as less than fully human beings by virtue of their lack of religion.”²⁹ Without religion, the San were regarded as the damned, fated to perish as impenitent heathen. The evangelical liberalism imported into the Cape Colony by key figures of the LMS and other missionary societies during the early 19th century led to an attempted dismantling of Calvinist determinism, still widely held among settler society.

Such assessments concerning the perceived lack of San religion have been effectively dismantled as incorrect. The San certainly did have religious customs and beliefs. This became apparent later on in the late 19th century when ethnographic observations of the San, and the Khoisan more generally, began to shed new light on their socio-cultural framework, including their religious and mythological belief systems.

Nonetheless, it must be noted that the San, and in particular, the Cape Bushmen or /Xam, had already suffered from the effects of over a century of persecution and its accompanying socio-cultural

²⁷ Quoted in L. Van der Post & J. Taylor “*Testament to the Bushmen*” p.x. 23-24.

²⁸ J.N. Gerstner “*A Christian Monopoly: The Reformed Church and Colonial Society under Dutch Rule*” In R. Elphick & R. Davenport (eds.) “*Christianity in South Africa*” Ch. 1, p. 17. See also the discussion by A. Du Toit “No Chosen People: The Myth of the Calvinist Origins of Afrikaner Nationalism and Racial Ideology” In *American Historical Review* 88, 1983.

²⁹ D. Chidester “*Bushman Religion: Open, Closed and New Frontiers*” In P. Skotnes (ed.) “*Miscast*” p. 59.

disruptions by the time they came under observation. As such, late 19th century ethnographic work must be considered in this light. This point is especially relevant when considering accounts of San religion, magic and myth drawn from the Bleek and Lloyd collection, in which much of what is known about these aspects of the /Xam is located.³⁰ It is beyond the reach of the historian or ethnographer to reconstruct an untainted, early 19th century San religion. The question of continuity is highly problematic. This same predicament was encountered by Elizabeth Elbourne in her work concerning 19th century Khoikhoi religion and the influences their already existing religious framework had on Khoikhoi receptivity to Christianity.³¹ Even so, general conclusions can and have been made.

There are some striking similarities between the San and Khoikhoi religions and mythical beliefs. For example, the shared reverence for and worship of the moon (not found among the Xhosa and Sotho-Tswana), as well as no signs of “organised ancestral worship.”³² The mythical figure that stands out among the San is that of /kaggen, embodied in the Mantis. Around the Mantis revolve a cycle of other mythical figures, all embodied in animals. These include the Mantis’ wife, /huntu!katt!katten, the Rock Dassie, as well as an adopted daughter, !xo, embodied in the Porcupine.³³ Evidently, many of the Sans’ supernatural beings correlated with animals, with whom they came into regular contact, in particular the Eland as well. The steady demise of these antelope due to excessive hunting surely had an influence upon the San’s mythical ideas pertaining to the animal, including its central role in initiation and hunting rituals. With man and nature having been inextricably bound – described as a kinship relationship by some authors – the negative effects that the trekboers’ excessive hunting would have had on the San, over and above the dilemma of reduced food sources, must be acknowledged.³⁴

Although both San and Khoikhoi religious systems were fluid, the San demonstrated a greater receptivity towards stories generally. Regardless of the cultural differences between the various San groups spread out across much of Southern Africa, a wide mythical base appears to have supported a complex assortment of San customs and rituals common to all of them. This was particularly true of the /Xam. This must be kept in mind when considering the efficacy of the proselytising ambitions of

³⁰ See the discussion in the Introduction: Historiography.

³¹ E. Elbourne “Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity” In *Kronos*, 19, 1992, p. 12.

³² I. Schapera “*The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa*” p. 395.

³³ Ibid. p. 177.

³⁴ See the discussion by S. Newton-King “*The Enemy Within the Struggle for Ascendancy on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1800*” p.x 183-184.

the LMS among the San communities of the north-eastern frontier zone during the course of the early 19th century.

Bredekamp and Ross argue that “The Christian faith maintains that conversion and continuation in the Church is an act of faith, and faith cannot be imposed.”³⁵ They also suggest that for the Christian faith to have been able to not only survive among the Khoisan, but grow, it had to become something they could internalise. If mission Christianity were not internalised, it would have remained something foreign and removed from the real life experiences of the mission dwellers. Studies of this process of appropriation among the Khoisan suggest that the Khoikhoi were more conducive to adopting the Gospel than the San. The Khoikhoi’s religious framework already included a God-like figure, *Tsui//Goab*, as well as “an evil trickster figure or devil”, *//Gaunab*.³⁶ Elbourne has also argued that “Cape Khoikhoi groups possessed independent ideas about a benevolent and powerful deity, who under certain circumstances could intervene in human affairs” prior to the commencement of mission activity at the Cape.³⁷

Indeed, among the supernatural beings of prominence for the Khoikhoi, *Tsui//Goab* and *//Gaunab* stood out. The potential that existed for a process of hybridisation to have occurred between these Khoikhoi figures and those of *God* and the *Devil* within Christianity is clearly evident, allowing for “both systems of belief to co-exist in a loose relationship of cross-fertilisation.”³⁸ The description offered by Schapera relating to the third important Khoikhoi mythological figure is no less striking: “*Heitsi Eibib* is said to have been a great and celebrated magician among the Hottentots... who did miraculous things. He conquered and annihilated all the enemies who killed his people; he was clever and wise; and could foretell what was going to happen in the future. He was born... of a young girl who had chewed a kind of grass and swallowed the juice, thereby becoming pregnant. He died in many places, was buried, and always came to life again...”³⁹ The remarkable resemblances of this account to that of the Biblical account of Jesus Christ – miracle worker, prophet, born independent of intercourse, and resurrected after death and burial – certainly would have provided ample opportunities for such cross-fertilisation to have occurred.

³⁵ H. Bredekamp & R. Ross “*The Naturalisation of Christianity in South Africa*” In H. Bredekamp & R. Ross (eds.) “*Missions and Christianity in South African History*” p. 2.

³⁶ N. Penn “*The Forgotten Frontier*” p. 248. See also the discussion by E. Elbourne & R. Ross “*Combating Spiritual and Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony*” In R. Elphick & R. Davenport (eds.) “*Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*” p.x. 33-34.

³⁷ E. Elbourne “Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity” In *Kronos*, 19, 1992, p. 12.

³⁸ C. Oladipo “*The Emergence of African Christianity and the End of the Imperial Era*” Conf. Paper.

³⁹ I. Schapera “*The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa*” p. 384.

The central religious building blocks of the Christian faith may have been more easily appropriated by the Khoikhoi without the abandonment of already held beliefs. In contrast, the San's general receptivity to mythical stories may have proven to be an obstacle to the zealous missionaries wishing to impose a monotheistic doctrine. This argument, although limited in scope due to it being largely based on supposition, is useful to keep in mind when tracing the history of the interaction between the LMS and the San. The numerous failures of the LMS among the San of the north-eastern frontier zone during the early 19th century, must however, not be assumed to rest within the suggested fluidity of San mythical beliefs alone. There were many other factors at play during the course of the period of interaction between the LMS missionaries and the San. These other contributing factors will be dealt with in greater detail as the story unfolds.

2.2) Colonialism & Conversion

It has been purported that the colonial pressures associated with the territorial advances of the trekboers and the rapid undermining of Khoisan⁴⁰ independence and self-sufficiency that this process entailed, assured the mission societies of ready converts. In an article titled "Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity", Elbourne contended that "societies in a state of profound crisis – dissolution even – are far more prone to seek new explanations and meaning systems" than those that have maintained a sense of social and political organisation and stability.⁴¹

In applying this "social crisis" explanation to the comparative early successes of the mission societies among the Cape Khoikhoi on the one hand, and their failures among the Cape San and Xhosa on the other, Elbourne argues that "the ranks of the dispossessed were more amenable to the Message than those, such as the Sak River San or the Xhosa, who had maintained their independence."⁴² The use of the term 'independence' in this assessment is, however, problematic. For while the San had been successful in halting the advance of the colonial frontier beyond the interior escarpment for much of the late 18th century, the scale and prolonged nature of the conflict – portrayed as "a life and death struggle"⁴³ for survival by some authors – and the extent of cultural

⁴⁰ The use of the term *Khoisan* is appropriate in the discussion to follow, as the social composition of the mission settlements within the Cape Colony was usually made up of both Khoikhoi and San. Where mission efforts were directed towards the San specifically, the term is avoided.

⁴¹ E. Elbourne "Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity" In *Kronos*, 19, 1992, p. 3.

⁴² E. Elbourne "*Blood Ground*" p. 121.

⁴³ N. Penn "*Fated to Perish*" p. 82.

exchange that had occurred as a result of the sporadic colonial encroachment, had most certainly altered the San's socio-cultural and economic nexus, dramatically undermining the 'independence' of their means of existence.

Moreover, from the time of the arrival of the LMS in 1799 until well into the 19th century, Namaqua and 'Bastaard' communities along the northern fringes of the Colony – under pressure from the increasing numbers of settler stock-farmers in the territory – actively sought out the protection that could be afforded to them by the missionaries. This occurred in spite of both their territorial distance from the Cape Colony proper and the degree of independence they still maintained. Indeed, the attraction of Namaqualand to dispossessed Khoikhoi and 'Bastaards' of the Cape Colony was its nominal state of independence – that is, the territory was removed from the socio-economic constraints which colonial Khoikhoi and 'Bastaards' had to endure.⁴⁴

As far as the Cape authorities were concerned, the north-western Cape frontier received little official attention between the crushing of the Khoisan resistance of the late 1730s and, remarkably, the 1840s.⁴⁵ Their attention was certainly distracted by the difficulties experienced along the eastern frontier, and by the renewed Khoisan resistance throughout the Roggeveld, Nieuweveld and Sneeuwberg during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Fierce Xhosa resistance in the east combined with widespread San attacks on the trekboers of the north-eastern Cape frontier zone resulted in halting the advance of the Colony in these directions. The colonial frontier continued to advance further north in due course, and in 1824 it was officially extended by the British authorities at the Cape to the Orange River.⁴⁶ Nonetheless, in keeping with what has been argued thus far, it would be unwise to assume that because the San in the north-east, beyond the interior escarpment, lived outside the official colonial boundary for much of the period under investigation they were beyond the dispossessing influences of colonial processes.

⁴⁴ It is worth noting that the San communities to the north-west, along the Orange River, had also been threatened by the depredations of the Afrikaner gang during the late 18th century. The disruption caused by the raids of the Afrikaners, as well as other 'Bastaard' and Oorlam groups, served to undermine the 'independence' of the indigenous communities in the north-western region of the Cape interior. Within this pre-colonial context, the missionaries at the mission station Rietfontein, established north of the Orange River, attracted "crowds of Korana, Namaqua, Einiqua, Bastaard-Hottentots, Bastaards and San." See the discussion by N. Penn "The Orange River Frontier Zone, c. 1700-1805" In A. Smith (ed.) *Einiqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier* p. 83.

⁴⁵ See the discussion by J.S. Marais "The Cape Coloured People, 1652-1937" p.x. 26-27.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 26.

Indeed, the decision undertaken by Johannes Kicherer and his companion, William Edwards, to establish a mission to the San beyond the north-eastern frontier must be understood within the context of these processes of colonial expansion and the Khoisan resistance which occurred in response to these processes. Notably, their decision, which was supported by the British administration in Cape Town, was motivated by a request for a mission to be established among the San of the Sak River region, which lies beyond the Roggeveld. This request was made by two San 'captains' along with a Korana 'captain' who visited Cape Town at the time of the arrival of the LMS in March 1799.⁴⁷

This incident raises a number of important points that require further emphasis. Firstly, the primary motivation for the early mission to the San coordinated by the LMS was in response to a visit from two San 'captains', who had travelled from Bushmanland to Cape Town, and who requested for such an institution to be founded beyond the Roggeveld and the colonial boundary.⁴⁸ In his account of the proceedings, Johannes Kicherer designated the two as having travelled to Cape Town "in the capacity of public ambassadors."⁴⁹ That Vigilant and Slaparm were received as 'captains', or as Kicherer suggested, 'ambassadors', is in itself noteworthy and indicative of the changing dynamics of San culture, which is generally regarded as having been devoid of political leadership.

Secondly, the means for their visit to Cape Town were set in place by the Roggeveld field-cornet, Floris Visser. Visser played a prominent role in the Cape Government's plans to pacify the San and restore stability to the north-eastern frontier.⁵⁰ In 1798, he was required by Governor Macartney's Proclamation concerning the "unsettled state of the frontier, between the farmers and the Bosjesmen" to "endeavour to persuade the Bosjesmen to consider themselves as under the protection and authority of the English Government".⁵¹ Visser's task also entailed an attempt to appoint chiefs or captains, which would be recognised by the Cape Government along the lines afforded to those Khoikhoi 'captains' that had been appointed in a similar manner. This is evidently where the reference to Vigilant and Slaparm as San 'captains' stems from and as such, should be regarded as a

⁴⁷ J. Du Plessis "A History of Christian Missions in South Africa" p. 102.

⁴⁸ There were in fact three so-called 'captains' in the deputation that visited Cape Town at this time, but Nigel Penn has argued that one of the three, Orlam, was more likely to have been a Korana, or at least had experienced a greater degree of colonial exposure, as his name suggests. See the discussion by N. Penn "The Forgotten Frontier" p. 137.

⁴⁹ J.J. Kicherer "The Rev. Mr. Kicherer's Narrative of His Mission to the Hottentots" p. 1.

⁵⁰ N. Penn "The Forgotten Frontier" p.x. 228-230.

⁵¹ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 5, Proclamations and Orders Relative to Commandos and Institutions, from 1796-1824. p.x. 348-349.

colonially inferred term and should not be seen as indicative of a condition of legitimate captaincy among the San themselves.⁵²

Lord Macartney's Proclamation of 1798 is significant in that it intended to re-evaluate the state of incessant violence that had plagued the north-eastern frontier for several years and to bring about lasting peace. The emphasis of the Proclamation was clearly upon facilitating the 'civilisation' of the San.⁵³ Also, a donation of livestock was ordered to be collected from among the local farmers in the Hantam, Roggeveld and Bokkeveld, which was to be given to the San in the hope that such a gift would dissuade them from stealing the farmers' cattle and sheep, which lay at the centre of the continuing cycle of frontier violence – provoking farmer antagonism, thus resulting in the cruel implementation of Commando tactics, which in turn, served to instigate further San theft and hostility.⁵⁴ This was tied up with the wider objective of encouraging the San to give up their nomadic, hunter-gathering lifestyle in exchange for settled, agrarian based subsistence. Article One affirmed this:

It appears that one of the first steps towards civilising and conciliating the Bosjesmen would be, to impress them with a sense of the benefits arising from permanent property preferable to casual and predatory supplies, and to make a free gift to them of such a quantity of cattle as may be sufficient for their immediate subsistence.

The Proclamation also sheds light on the Government's desires with regards to the future of the San and their place within the steadily expanding Colony. Article Ten of the Proclamation re-asserted the Government's position of adopting more conciliatory methods to pacify the San and it attempted to encourage the colonists to comply with the new approach by offering favourable incentives:

And as the reclaiming of these Bosjesmen from their present savage and deplorable state is not only of the greatest importance to the Colony, but highly interesting to humanity, it is hereby declared that not only the fieldwachtmeester Visser and Louir, who are the

⁵² See the discussion by N. Penn "The Forgotten Frontier" p.x. 228-230.

⁵³ J. Wright "Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg" p. 27.

⁵⁴ Equipped with poisoned arrows, with which they were most adept, and sometimes even firearms acquired through theft or trade, the San frequently raided frontier farms. In numerous attacks, not only were livestock stolen, but the farmstead was burned, the crops destroyed, and whatever cattle or sheep that remained beyond their means to steal were often killed. Residents at the farm, including the settlers and their indigenous or slave labourers, were also susceptible to being murdered if unable to defend themselves. See M. Szalay "The San and the Colonisation of the Cape 1770-1879" p.x. 17-18.

principals of the undertaking, but all such other persons as shall by their prudence, activity and good dispositions contribute to its happy success, will be entitled to the particular attention and favour of Government.

In addition, Article Four of the Proclamation set aside “a sufficient district beyond the Sack River” that was assigned to the habitation of the San – Bushmanland – while Article Nine stated that the field-cornets of the north-eastern districts were “to encourage some of the principal Bosjesmen to come up to Cape Town to wait upon the governor to receive marks of kindness and approbation from him.”⁵⁵ Hence the visit of Vigilant and Slaparm to Cape Town that coincided with the arrival of the LMS – their request for a mission to be established in Bushmanland set in motion a thirty year long history of interaction between the LMS and the San.

The policy of gift-giving was one of three attempts that were made in the effort to restore stability to the north-eastern frontier through more peaceable means than the Commando system, along with the demarcation of Bushmanland and the commencing of mission activity in the territory. In time the gift-giving broke down as farmers refused to make the contributions and Bushmanland was frequently traversed by trekboer pastoralists and hunting parties alike. The mission to the San was a far more complex process, in terms of its efforts, duration and failures.

2.3) The Arrival of the LMS & the First San Mission, 1799-1806

The reasoning and motivation behind the San captains’ request for a mission station to be established among them must be sought within the wider colonial context of the Cape Colony during this time. Indeed, the mission societies commenced with the implementation of their ‘commission’ among communities in a state of social and economic upheaval – specifically, the Cape Khoisan. The dynamics of the mission project during these early years of mission activity in South Africa provide useful points of departure for this discussion. Upon the arrival of the four LMS missionaries, the only other mission society actively engaged in missionary work among the indigenous communities at the Cape was that of the United Brethren, or Moravians, who were established at Genadendal in the Overberg, beyond the Hottentot Hollands Mountains. Re-established in 1792 by Hendrik Marsveld,

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Daniel Schwinn and Johann Kühnel, Genadendal succeeded early on in drawing significant numbers of local Khoisan into its sphere of influence.⁵⁶

By 1796 it had become the largest settlement in the Cape Colony after Cape Town, and by the turn of the century over 1 200 residents were housed in over 200 lodgings at the site.⁵⁷ The significance of Genadendal during these initial stages of mission activity at the Cape rests upon its reputation among the leading figures of the subsequent mission projects beyond the Overberg; including Van der Kemp and Kicherer, who visited the mission before proceeding on their separate ways, and at which time their assistants, John Edmond and William Edwards, were also officially ordained by the Roodezand minister M.C. Vos. The visit of Van der Kemp and Kicherer was one of many to follow and although unintentionally, set a precedent for the many missionaries that arrived at the Cape in later years. Often times, the first stop on the so-called 'Missionary Road' was Genadendal.

From the time of its re-establishment until the mid-19th century, Genadendal "served as an example for the many missionary activities which spread across Southern Africa."⁵⁸ The mission's early and sustained success among the Cape Khoisan, some travelling to the site from well beyond the Overberg, achieved high acclaim, notably from the Cape authorities, under both British and Dutch administration⁵⁹, as well as the later arrivals of the Paris, Rhenish and Berlin Missionary Societies and American Board Mission.⁶⁰ The second wave of pioneering Moravians were encouraged by the discovery of the pear tree that was still growing on the very spot that Georg Schmidt, *the* missionary pioneer, had planted it some fifty years earlier, and no doubt saw the hand of Providence at work when they encountered the 80 year old Magdalena, who had been baptised by Schmidt and who still possessed the Dutch New Testament Schmidt had given her.⁶¹ The spiritual symbolism of such 'signs' certainly left an indelible impression upon the Moravians and indeed, the time spent at Genadendal by Van der Kemp and Kicherer prior to their departure for the eastern and northern

⁵⁶ The station was first founded by Georg Schmidt in 1737. It was the Cape's first mission station. Schmidt returned to Europe in 1743 due to illness and mounting antagonism from the Dutch Reformed clergy and the station soon after deteriorated. At the time of the arrival of the 1792 missionaries, the location was known as Baviaans Kloof (Ravine of the Baboons). The name was changed to Genadendal (Valley of Grace) in 1806.

⁵⁷ N. Penn "The Forgotten Frontier" p.x. 239-240.

⁵⁸ B. Kruger "The Pear Tree Blossoms" p. 188.

⁵⁹ Upon surrendering the Cape to the British in 1795, Governor Sluysken wrote a letter to the incoming administration commending the work of the Moravians at Genadendal. See J. Du Plessis "A History of Christian Missions in South Africa" p. 74.

⁶⁰ B. Kruger "The Pear Tree Blossoms" p.x. 185-188.

⁶¹ J. Du Plessis "A History of Christian Missions in South Africa" p.x. 72-73 & C. Janneke "Reconstructing the South African Moravian Missionary Narrative" Conf. Paper.

frontiers respectively, must have fuelled their desire to see similar missions established under the auspices of the LMS.

The purpose of the mission station, such as at Genadendal and Sak River, was to provide an environment removed from the daily deprivations of so-called 'heathen' life, in which Christian principles could be inculcated and practiced and where worldly temptations were actively kept to an absolute minimum. Although this idealistic motivation proved difficult to achieve, the admiration granted to Genadendal had much to do with the perceived industry of its inhabitants, which certainly contributed to the community's commendable self-sufficiency.

In the report of an inquiry into the "Origins, Progress and Present State of the Missions of the United Brethren" at the Cape, coordinated in 1823, it was noted that approximately two thousand individuals resided at the Moravian missions of Genadendal, Groenekloof and Enon.⁶² Mr. Hallbeck, who undertook the task of providing the Government with a sketch of the Moravian mission project, stated that "Most of the Hottentots residing in our establishments have attained a clear knowledge on all the practical points of Christian doctrine", and that "great numbers of the rising generation have learned to read and write." He continued, "An improvement in industry has been affected. Cutlers, smiths, joiners, wheelwrights and shoemakers have been trained by missionaries of those trades; and by the wives of missionaries female Hottentots have been taught to excel in embroidery and various needle-work." Descriptions such as this one clearly stressed the industriousness of the mission residents and served to re-affirm the reputation of the Moravian mission stations in the Cape Colony well into the 19th century. This reputation was attested to by the likes of Col. Collins, who was full of praise of the Moravians at "Grace Dale"⁶³, while Lord Somerset was "firmly of the opinion that the Hottentots... become more useful members of society under the Moravian institutions than under any of the other missionary societies."⁶⁴

The Christianity that was imported into the Cape by the mission societies and taught among the indigenous and slave populations was inextricably tied up with what were regarded as key tenets of European civilisation, of which one of the most important was self-sustaining agrarian settlement. This was very much due to the social and economic upheavals taking place in Europe at the time.

⁶² British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 2, Brief Sketch of the Origin, Progress and Present State of the Missions of the United Brethren in the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope, p. 320.

⁶³ D. Moodie "The Record", Collins' Report on the Bosjesmen, p. 35.

⁶⁴ CA GH 23/7/248, 10 December 1825.

The subsequent steady arrival of various other missionary societies at the Cape in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was as a result of the evangelical revival that had begun in the United Kingdom in the mid-18th century and had spread to include other parts of Protestant and Reformed Europe.⁶⁵

The missionaries were social ‘products’ of this evangelical revivalism, in addition to the Industrial Revolution and the changing face of Europe in response to the dawn of the age of modernity. The new Protestant ethic emphasised inner conviction and personal conversion.⁶⁶ The Calvinist conception of predestination, with its distinction between those who were elect and those who were damned or heathen, was rejected by the mission societies, and evangelism achieved the status of a primary religious duty. Among the most influential motivations of evangelism during the late 18th and early 19th centuries was obedience to Christ’s ‘commission’ and a concern for the fate of the unconverted. Evangelical theology – as it emerged during a series of evangelical awakenings from the mid-18th century onwards – maintained an increasing emphasis upon the theology of Christian life. Accompanying the knowledge of the saving grace of God was expected to be a change in the disposition of the individual’s character.⁶⁷ The emergence of this “life theology” among Protestant circles in Europe is significant in terms of its relevance to understanding the Protestant mission project undertaken at the Cape. As the Comaroffs assert, “the study of missionaries in Africa ought to begin in Europe.”⁶⁸

The growing significance of humanitarianism within this evangelical trend was largely due to the extension of the notion of personal, spiritual redemption, to include redemption from social and economic deprivation. Humanitarian evangelicalism gained popular support in Britain in particular, inspired by a new Protestant dynamism during the late 18th century, while simultaneously serving her industrialising interests in “extending production and markets.”⁶⁹

Central to the ideology of humanitarian evangelicalism was the superiority of Christian civilisation. The evangelicals accepted that all people belonged to the same humanity and that the so-called ‘backward’ races were to be considered as victims of their environment. However, individuals and societies were malleable and therefore, the indigenous inhabitants of the colonised world had the

⁶⁵ See discussion by T. Keegan “*Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order*” p.x. 75-76.

⁶⁶ J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff “*Of Revelation and Revolution*” p. 61.

⁶⁷ S. Ferguson et. al (eds.) “*New Dictionary of Theology*” p. 239.

⁶⁸ J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff “*Of Revelation and Revolution*” p. 54.

⁶⁹ T. Keegan “*Colonial South Africa and the Origins of the Racial Order*” p. 76.

potential to adopt both Christianity and Christian civilisation. Under the leadership and guidance of the resident missionaries, the mission dwellers were to become a “new society” abandoning “those aspects of their culture found repugnant to Christian morality and civilisation.”⁷⁰ The potential for personal acculturation and the birth of a “new society” could only be realised if the indigenous peoples were provided with the appropriate environment within which to obtain Christian instruction and learn by example. This thinking laid the ideological and spiritual foundation upon which the mission stations were built and was to prove significant in the various missions to the San that were attempted during the first three decades of the 19th century.

Again, Genadendal provides a useful example of the humanitarian evangelical project at work. The United Brethren⁷¹ had been founded by German Protestants who had fled Habsburg rule in order to escape religious persecution, and their original settlement at Herrnhut, in Saxony, acted as a template, or prototype, for the mission stations they established in South Africa and elsewhere. According to Ludlow, “Herrnhut was very much the response of a threatened pre-industrial and rural community.”⁷² That the first work by the Moravians in the Cape was among the Khoisan – a threatened, pre-industrial, rural community – suggests an appreciation of shared experiences by the early missionaries.

During the course of his travels through the Cape Colony undertaken on behalf of the Dutch administration between 1803 and 1806, the German explorer Henry Lichtenstein visited Genadendal.⁷³ Several of the remarks he made concerning the day to day activities of the institution prove useful for assessing how the mission was administered. He made special mention of the station’s gardens. The missionaries’ garden stood alongside the church and was well watered by the irrigation channels which had been built to support it. Credit for the very good condition of the garden was granted to Brother Schwinn, who was said to be “an excellent gardener”. Behind the garden lay the cemetery, “laid out exactly in the manner of the Herrenhutens in Germany” with the graves assembled in “regular rows”. In addition, Brother Kühnel’s efforts at manufacturing knives is noted, as well as Brother Marsveld’s successful water-mill, built “after the European manner” and

⁷⁰ See the discussion by P. Harries “*Butterflies and Barbarians*” p.x. 80-85.

⁷¹ *Unitas Fratrum*, more commonly known as the Moravian church.

⁷² H. Ludlow “*Missions and Emancipation in the South Western Cape: A Case Study of Groenekloof (Mamre), 1838-52*” p. 35.

⁷³ H. Lichtenstein “*Travels in Southern Africa*” p.x. 185-195.

“in which he grinds not only all the corn for the household and the Hottentots, but a great deal for the neighbouring colonists.”

Of particular interest is Lichtenstein's description of the mission dwellers' gardens, which were to be found behind every family house. Vegetables and fruit trees were grown through the provision of farming implements and seeds. Those families that were most industrious were at times rewarded with more land, while those that failed to overcome the indolence so often associated with the Khoisan by travel writers and colonists alike, were punished by having a portion of their land taken away. While the Khoisan were certainly well accustomed with the land that was being transformed before their eyes by the missionaries' efforts to cultivate the soil and irrigate the water – possessing knowledge of the land and its resources well beyond that of the missionaries at the time of their arrival at the Cape – these efforts also attempted to inculcate an appreciation for the aesthetic ordering of the landscape.⁷⁴ This is evidenced by the neat gardens, fenced off from each other, along with the rows of cottages, built in the European style, commented on by numerous contemporary visitors to Genadendal, including the likes of Lady Anne Barnard, Lichtenstein, Burchell and the Rev. Latrobe.

It is apparent from Lichtenstein's observations that the establishment of a very clear link between Christianity and regular labour was being attempted by the missionaries. Christian conversion went beyond the spiritual and eternal to encompass the daily routine. The mission dwellers were intended to achieve self-sufficiency through their diligent labour and live settled, agrarian lives. This somewhat pragmatic side of the mission endeavour projected Christian ideals of sedentary life upon the Khoisan and the inculcation of such underlying tenets of European civilisation was intrinsically linked to the proposed advancement or 'civilisation' of the Khoisan. No doubt the religious symbolism of tending the fields, of sowing and reaping, also proved influential, providing the necessary 'spiritual' justification for the emphasis placed upon agricultural production on the part of the mission societies.

News of the re-establishment of Genadendal in 1792 “spread like wildfire in the country”; throughout the surrounding areas and beyond, even as far as the district of Graaff-Reinet.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ P. Harries “*Butterflies and Barbarians*” p. 103.

⁷⁵ *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions of the Church of the United Brethren, Established Among the Heathen*, Vol. 1, (1790-94), p. 291, Quoted in E. Elbourne, “Early Khoisan Uses of Mission Christianity” In *Kronos* 19, 1992, p. 3

“Individuals, families and whole groups, arriving with their cattle, set up their kraals in the Kloof” and within a year, an average of two hundred attended the regular Church services.⁷⁶ It must be noted that for a number of the Khoisan who requested to settle at Genadendal, and later at the other various mission stations dotted throughout the colony, their reasons for doing so were often genuinely religious. The missionaries at Genadendal recorded that they were asked questions pertaining to the immortality of the soul and spiritual well-being on an almost daily basis.

Likewise, similar sentiments of concern with regards to the redemption of the soul were also recorded at Bethelsdorp. In a letter of correspondence to his cousin in The Hague, Johannes Van der Kemp, writing from Bethelsdorp, expressed his delight in being “able to number at least twenty Hottentots, of whose sincere conversion to God we have no doubt” and that “God proceeds daily to enlighten others of our people”⁷⁷ Though it would be unwise not to assume that many of the newcomers saw the mission station as an escape from the deprivations of farm life; whether the motive was genuine religious conviction or perceived socio-economic opportunities, “the mission station offered liberation in a society where the ideology of slavery prevailed.”⁷⁸

Furthermore, in order to effectively inculcate the Gospel, and improve the standard of living of the Khoisan, the missionaries provided education, and in particular literacy. The close connection established between Christianity and education found resonance among mission dwellers early on. A Christian education quickly became the hallmark of social respectability – “One old lady, finding herself too old to learn to read, had to be reassured that illiterates could enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”⁷⁹

Indeed, the mission was a significant attraction to a community that had been dispossessed of its land and cattle, coerced into farm labour, and subjected to colonial laws. Engagement with the missionaries provided useful opportunities for the surrounding Khoisan communities. Pastoral groups often sought out missionaries, who brought livestock with them, in the hope of bartering for cattle, as well as other commodities which the missionaries’ contacts with Cape Town offered. For those Khoisan individuals and families who did take up occupation at the missions, one of the

⁷⁶ B. Kruger “*The Pear Tree Blossoms*” p. 55.

⁷⁷ J. Van der Kemp, 6 April 1803, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 16.

⁷⁸ R. Viljoen “*Moravian Missionaries, Khoisan Labour and the Overberg Colonists at the End of the VOC Era, 1792-5*” In H. Bredekamp & R. Ross (eds.) “*Missions & Christianity in South African History*” p. 51.

⁷⁹ E. Elbourne & R. Ross “*Combating Spiritual and Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony*” In “*Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*” p. 46.

primary benefits was the chance to acquire mechanical skills, provided by the missionaries' schooling of station adults and children alike.

In the context of the Cape Colony, the mission station "provided a place to leave stock and children, and served as a bastion against *de facto* enslavement."⁸⁰ In many ways, the missionaries symbolised a sense of protection from the debilitating effects of the advancing colonial frontier. Those Khoikhoi and 'Bastaards' who were unable to secure mission protection soon augmented the ranks of the growing numbers of landless labourers found on colonial farms throughout the Cape. The historical outcome for the San was in some instances similar, but for many others, it was far more devastating.

In August 1799, Kicherer and Edwards decided upon a location approximately one day's journey north of the Sak River which they considered to be suitable for the establishment of a mission.⁸¹ The site was well situated to attend to the mission project at hand, intended to pacify and evangelise the San along the north-eastern frontier. Most notably, it had two springs. The site was named Blydevoornuitzicht Fontein (Happy Prospects Fountain). This was the first, short-lived attempt at establishing a mission to the San. By March 1800, the mission was relocated further south, along the Sak River. In spite of the assistance given to the missionaries by the local farming community, coordinated by Floris Visser, the decision to move the mission was due to the threats made by nearby San kraals, the residents of which were ill-disposed towards the missionaries. Yet, during the seven month existence of Blydevoornuitzicht Fontein, increasing numbers of San began to reside at or around the mission.⁸²

Kicherer did not fail to lament about the difficulties he and Edwards encountered in their initial attempts to instil an appreciation for the Gospel among the mission residents and visitors. He asserted that "They have no idea whatever of the Supreme Being, consequently they practice no kind of worship... they have a superstitious reverence for a little insect known by the name of Creeping-leaf."⁸³ It is evident that Kicherer was referring to the Praying Mantis in this description; therefore, it appears that at this early juncture in the existence of the mission at Blydevoornuitzicht Fontein, the

⁸⁰ E. Elbourne & R. Ross "Combating Spiritual & Social Bondage: Early Missions in the Cape Colony" In R. Elphick & R. Davenport (eds.) "Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social & Cultural History" p. 36.

⁸¹ N. Penn "The Forgotten Frontier" p. 240.

⁸² See the discussion by K. Schoeman "J.J. Kicherer en die Vroeë Sending 1799-1806".

⁸³ J.J. Kicherer "The Rev. Mr. Kicherer's Narrative of His Mission to the Hottentots" p. 6.

majority of the members of the small community were San, owing to their communal reverence for the insect, which held an important symbolic and mythical place in San beliefs and customs.⁸⁴

One of the crucial factors upon which the long term viability of Blydevooruitzicht Fontein would have rested was the predicament of communication, or language, which challenged the missionaries. Just as Georg Schmidt had experienced difficulties in learning the Khoikhoi language at Baviaans Kloof and therefore decided to undertake the daunting task of teaching the Khoi Dutch, Kicherer and Edwards pursued a similar strategy.⁸⁵ Kicherer opted to teach a group of mission residents Dutch, while Edwards chose to teach another group English.⁸⁶ In order for this plan to have any effect, both missionaries relied upon the services of several translators whose names are mentioned in the surviving records. Three names in particular received special recognition: Carolus Bastert, a Khoikhoi who could speak /Xam, and Willem Fortuin and his wife, Catharina Dorothea. Both could speak /Xam and Dutch, and interestingly, Catharina is noted as having been /Xam herself.⁸⁷

By teaching the mission residents Dutch and English and by designating to some of them Christian names, as is evidenced by Willem and Catharina, the missionaries were actively engaged in fortifying the foundational building blocks of the mission project, as well as the physical expression of their 'commission' by ordering the day to day activities on the mission station. This is quite clear from Kicherer's own description of how he and Edwards sought to inculcate a daily routine of Christian conduct:

In the following manner we instruct the people: In the morning we all assemble together, when we sing an hymn, called the Morning Hymn, (which they know tolerably well), afterwards we all bend our knees; this being done, the old people depart, and the young people we instruct in the Dutch orthography, some of whom can already spell very well. In the afternoon we assemble again, and read to them one or two psalms. After giving out two lines at a time, we explain the principal content of what they sing, and then teach them, by the interposition of an interpreter, Dutch words, and also to count numbers,

⁸⁴ For example, see the discussion by I. Schapera "The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa" p. 177.

⁸⁵ J. Du Plessis "A History of Christian Missions in South Africa" p. 54. See also the discussion by A. Traill "!'Khwa-ka Hhouiten Hhouiten 'The Rush of the Storm': The Linguistic Death of /Xam" In P. Skotnes (ed.) "Claim to the Country" p. 139.

⁸⁶ J.J. Kicherer "The Rev. Mr. Kicherer's Narrative of His Mission to the Hottentots" p. 33.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

*which they then repeat again in the Boschemen's language. In our evening exercises we sometimes set the eldest, each in his turn, to pray aloud.*⁸⁸

The above description clearly emphasises the extent of efforts the missionaries employed to 'Christianise' and educate the mission residents. However, manual labour also played an equally important role in the day to day proceedings of life at the station, very much in keeping with the example set by the Moravians at Genadendal, and of course, necessary for achieving self-sufficiency. Kicherer remarked:

*"Our days are spent in the following manner. About the time of sun-rising we collect together for prayer, when we read the Scriptures and sing a hymn; then the elderly people depart, and the business of the school commences... School being over we proceed to our manual labour, such as gardening and building..."*⁸⁹

While certain elements of the San inhabitants of Bushmanland proved hostile to the presence of the missionaries, others proved to be amenable to the mission and in time the size of the community began to grow. So much so that Kicherer's language changed altogether, from lamentations to jubilations. Taking into consideration the removal of the mission from the site at Blydevooruitzicht Fontein further south to the Sak River in March 1800, it is noteworthy that there was a definite increase in the size of the population during the mission's seven month tenure. Kicherer commented that "the number of Boschemen considerably increased"; he continued, "business increasing everyday and the Boschemen flocking to us in considerable numbers" and "often did I feel inexpressibly happy when setting forth to these poor creatures the infinite grace of our Redeemer."⁹⁰ The actual number of mission dwellers at the mission is not clear, yet on the basis of Kicherer's remarks, the continued existence of the community appears to have been promising at this time.

Furthermore, the good will demonstrated by the likes of Floris Visser towards the mission settlement was complimented by other farmers from the Roggeveld and the surrounding area, such as one Francis Moritz, who in October 1799 gave the community "a handsome present" including one bull

⁸⁸ Ibid. p.x. 35-36.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 9.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

and thirty sheep.⁹¹ The limitations of Kicherer's abilities to distinguish between Khoikhoi and San, or rather appreciate the socio-cultural differences between the two, were evidenced by his account of the actions of Moritz's "Hottentot" farm workers: "they cheerfully added to them [the gifts of Moritz] several sheep of their own, as an expression of their joy in the blessing of the Gospel being brought to their *countrymen*" (my emphasis).⁹² Indeed, Kicherer used the terms "Boschemen" and "Hottentots" interchangeably; often times he referred to "Boschemen" as "Wild Hottentots".⁹³ Therefore, he regarded the gift of Moritz's "Hottentots" as having been given in an act of generosity towards fellow "countrymen". Perhaps Moritz's labourers were not "Hottentots", that is Khoikhoi, at all, but San. There is no way of being absolutely sure.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that the missionaries at Blydevooruitzicht Fontein enjoyed amiable relations with many farmers in the vicinity. Kicherer recorded that the spiritual services offered by he and Edwards also attracted colonial farmers to the station, with an unspecified number attending the worship services.⁹⁴ Often times, these farmers supplied the mission community with much needed provisions. As such, the demise of the institution was not due to antagonism from the local farming community, as was very much the case with several subsequent San missions. Rather, the decision to relocate the mission was in response to threats from neighbouring San kraals, which were ill-disposed towards the missionaries.

It is problematic to determine whether those San individuals and families that settled at the mission, or regularly visited, were "in a state of profound crisis" compared to those that resisted the missionaries. However, what is certain is that the San communities of the north-eastern frontier zone were, and had been, under mounting pressure due to the advances of the trekboers and the hunting parties that had brought about a rapid decline in the numbers of wild game in the territory, further exacerbating the precariousness of the San's ability to remain self-sufficient and independent. The widely dispersed nature of the San communities along the fringes of the colonial frontier must be taken into consideration in the attempt to account for why some San kraals proved acquiescent to the presence of the missionaries, and why others did not, even to the point of being openly hostile towards the mission settlement.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 12.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 3 & p. 8, for example.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p.x. 12-13.

The debilitating effects of the advancing frontier may have been more detrimental for some San kraals as opposed to others, of greater size and strength in numbers and weaponry. Indeed, competition for the fast diminishing resources of the land, owing to the trekboers incursions, would have occurred between, and within, San communities, as well as between the San, the Khoikhoi and the settlers. In spite of the promising signs exhibited by the mission at Blydevoorzicht Fontein – rising numbers of residents, assistance from the local farmers, and a degree of self-sufficiency, augmented by the generosity of the likes of Moritz – the threats posed by nearby San kraals were regarded as too alarming to ignore. In March 1800, the mission was moved to the south, to the Sak River.

At the new site at Sak River, Kicherer resumed the ‘good work’.⁹⁵ Just as at Blydevoorzicht Fontein, the first task was to achieve a degree of self-sufficiency. This included the planting of a garden – an important marker of mission self-sufficiency and *the* primary means through which the practical application of Christian industry was to be imparted to the residing San. As the Comaroffs suggest, the mission garden was “more than merely a source of food, it was also an exemplary appropriation of space and an icon of colonial evangelism”.⁹⁶ The mission dwellers would no longer merely live off the land, but their future subsistence would be bound up with ‘mastering’ the land. Although conversion remained the principal aim of the missionaries, Christianity and European civilisation were inextricably bound in the Cape of the early 19th century. The reward for industrious and dutiful behaviour was to be baptised and received into the mission society, the true marker of Christian progress.⁹⁷

Furthermore, Christian ‘respectability’ entailed a variety of outward and material expressions, which went well beyond regular church attendance, piety and prayer. Literacy and labour in particular were hallmarks of social respectability and the post-salvation Christian lifestyle, along with European-style clothing and housing.⁹⁸ That these badges of respectability functioned as important social markers for marginalised and dispossessed communities within the Cape colonial context of the early 19th century is widely accepted, but it is worth noting that they also served as spiritual markers

⁹⁵ Edwards decided to remain at Blydevoorzicht Fontein. This was largely due to the antagonism he felt towards Kicherer. Shortly after Kicherer’s departure for the Sak River, Edwards abandoned Blydevoorzicht Fontein and commenced mission work along the Orange River to the north. See Appendix A.

⁹⁶ J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff “Cultivation, Christianity & Colonialism: Towards a New African Genesis” In J. De Gruchy (ed.) *The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa, 1799-1999* p. 63.

⁹⁷ H. Lichtenstein “Travels in Southern Africa” p. 193.

⁹⁸ R. Ross “Missions, Respectability and Civil Rights: The Cape Colony, 1828-1854” In *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 25, 1999, p. 338.

indicative of the converts' progress, bearing the 'fruit' by which the missionaries would be able to discern between the 'wheat' and the 'tares'.

This would prove crucial for the missions to the San, for in order to 'civilise' them, the missionaries would have to begin with what the Comaroffs term "the terrain of everyday life."⁹⁹ As has been demonstrated, settlement and industry were crucial elements of the mission project – they were the foundation upon which Christian ideals and religious instruction were to be built and maintained. The same would certainly be true in the practical application of the mission effort to the San. However, self-sufficiency proved difficult to achieve in the terrain of Bushmanland, which was dry for many months of the year and often received minimal rainfall. This created an early dilemma for the missionaries at the Sak River.

Moreover, Kicherer continued to lament about the daily struggle he had to encounter in his efforts to "civilise" the mission residents: "I pray you to consider, how much the keeping of 3-400 Bushesmen must necessarily have required, they being people unaccustomed to work for their living, and who is the first out set I must not urge to hard to lend a helping hand towards their own maintenance."¹⁰⁰ He continued, "Nor was it less incumbent upon me to cover the naked limbs of our 83 converts with cloths, they till then being used to wear skins only. In this point too I had to assist them a good deal at first, and yet, according to my ideas, Christianity requires propriety, cleanliness and decency of dress."¹⁰¹

At this juncture, it is necessary to assess what must have been expressed as disapproval by many of the San residing at or regularly visiting the mission in response to Kicherer's attempts to impart the basic building blocks of spiritual functionalism.¹⁰² Firstly, the mixed community of between three and four hundred – Kicherer allowed for a wide margin of error in his estimation – was already in itself an altered form of social interaction and engagement for those resident San. The primary unit of social organisation was traditionally the "hunting band", consisting of a few families.¹⁰³ Secondly,

⁹⁹ J. Comaroff & J. Comaroff "Cultivation, Christianity & Colonialism: Towards a New African Genesis" In J. De Gruchy (ed.) "The London Missionary Society in Southern Africa, 1799-1999" p. 55.

¹⁰⁰ J. Kicherer, 19 August 1803, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 17.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² The following discussion is drawn from Schapera "The Khoisan Peoples of South Africa". Schapera relied very much upon the Bleek and Lloyd collection, which focused specifically upon the /Xam. Regarded as representative of what Lucy Lloyd termed the Southern Bushmen, the /Xam were found predominantly in the region of the Cape interior under review.

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 75.

Kicherer's position as the head of the mission, exercising authority and expecting compliance, would also have been foreign to the San mission dwellers. With the hunting band as the "real political body", the San were not culturally accustomed to a central authority figure, whose decisions were binding.¹⁰⁴

Thirdly, prolonged settlement and agricultural subsistence were arguably even more foreign to the San's social and economic framework. Their movements were "regulated according to the season and rainfall."¹⁰⁵ This requirement of the mission project can be safely regarded as having been the most difficult for the San to adapt to. Finally, the demarcation and cultivation of the mission land, which was intended to induce an appreciation for the benefits of private property and Christian industry would have proven equally problematic for the missionaries. While notions of private property certainly did exist among the San – including personal ownership of objects and individual rights to a particular beehive for example, as well as hunting band rights to certain stretches of land and water spots – the land was owned in common. All these cultural nuances would have worked together to hinder the process of cultural overhaul envisioned by the missionaries.

Nonetheless, in considering the contributing factors that led to the failure of the Sak River mission, Kicherer should receive much attention. While he and Edwards were always going to be hard pressed to inculcate the European ideals of settlement and agrarian production among the San, whose cultural and economic framework hinged upon nomadic hunting and gathering, Kicherer's career as a missionary at the Cape was one marked by a significant degree of restlessness. For example, in February 1800, before the relocation of the mission to the Sak River, he visited Cape Town, during which time he preached in Paarl. In July 1801, he journeyed to the Orange River, where he remained until March 1802, working among the Korana. His mission work among the Korana along the Orange River was undertaken in response to a request from several Korana who had visited the Sak River mission in May 1801 and who had invited Kicherer to come preach among them.¹⁰⁶ Thereafter, in March 1803, he left the Cape, accompanied by three Sak River converts, and travelled to Europe, visiting the Netherlands and London, before returning to the Cape in January 1805 (Arie Vos returned with Kicherer at this time and travelled with him to the Sak River mission).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 76.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 91.

¹⁰⁶ J.J. Kicherer *"The Rev. Mr. Kicherer's Narrative of His Mission to the Hottentots"* p. 23.

¹⁰⁷ K. Schoeman *"The Early Mission in South Africa"* p.x. 234-237.

In addition to Kicherer's intermittent departures from the Sak River mission, he and Edwards did not share much mutual respect for each other. Edwards' "hatred towards Kicherer" was already problematic at Blydevoorzicht Fontein.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear what the reasons behind their antagonism were, but it must be assumed that their personal grievances, which culminated in Edwards' lodging of a complaint against Kicherer in Cape Town following the relocation of the San mission from Blydevoorzicht Fontein to the Sak River, would have undermined any potential, long term success of the mission in Bushmanland.

The most significant aspect of the new mission at the Sak River for this discussion was that the missionaries found themselves ministering to an increasingly mixed community. While numbers of San residents at Blydevoorzicht Fontein accompanied Kicherer to the Sak River, the new site was situated closer to the colonial frontier, along the official border with Bushmanland, and it attracted Khoikhoi and 'Bastaards', as well as residents of slave descendant, in addition to San. This is evidenced by the three 'prize converts' from the Sak River mission that toured Europe with Kicherer between 1803 and 1804. Of the three, not one was San or even of mixed San descent. Martha Arendse was of partial slave and Khoikhoi descent, as was Sara Fortuin. While some uncertainty remains with Klaas van Rooij, he was nonetheless, either pure Khoikhoi, or a 'Bastaard-Hottentot' of slave descent.¹⁰⁹

That the Sak River mission community was not exclusively San raises two important points. Firstly, with this being the case, the failure of the mission cannot rest solely with the San residents. The Sak River mission was 'mixed-race' as most of the missions that were established throughout the Cape during the early 19th century were – this should not be seen as debilitating to the mission cause. Indeed, it was among the ranks of the marginalised and dispossessed, including the 'Bastaards' and 'Bastaard-Hottentots', that some of the mission societies' most eager converts were to be found.

As such, the failure of the Sak River mission cannot be treated solely in terms of the existence of some counter-productive cultural nuance or mythical framework among the San specifically that undermined the mission's long term viability. Rather, the failure of the Sak River mission was as a result of a combination of a variety of factors. These included the prolonged drought, referred to in Vos' letter as the 'great drought', which had led to the Sak River drying up and remaining dry since

¹⁰⁸ H. Maanenbergh & G. Overbeck, 26 November 1802, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 15.

¹⁰⁹ E. Elbourne "Blood Ground" p.x. 122-123.

1800; and in April 1806, Kicherer took up the offer of minister of the Dutch Church at Graaff-Reinet, bringing to an end his personal proselytising efforts among the San. The concerns raised by the missionary Vos also indicated the difficulties the mission was experiencing due to the continuing acts of stock theft by some of the local San.

Indeed, the generosity of several farmers in the region, such as that of Floris Visser and Francis Moritz, which had served to provide the mission community with much needed supplies in times of scarcity, was curtailed by the ongoing San raids on the farmers' livestock.¹¹⁰ Vos noted that even if he were able to secure funds for the purchase of sheep, it would not have been possible due to the scale of the theft that was occurring.¹¹¹ Likewise, the mission settlement itself was a target of San raiding parties. The situation had become so dire that Vos asserted that it was not safe to travel even a short distance from the mission's immediate environs.¹¹² As a consequence, the mission station was abandoned in August 1806, with several members and families of the congregation following Kicherer to Graaff-Reinet.

The 'mixed-race' characteristic of the Sak River mission community was equally characteristic of the subsequent missions established by the LMS to the San. Therefore, the intention of establishing missions to the San in particular, on the part of the Cape government and the LMS alike, in order to facilitate their 'Christianisation' and pacification was thwarted early on. Indeed, the mission to the San failed when Blydevoornzicht Fontein was abandoned; for since then, no mission station subsequently established by the LMS catered exclusively to the San. Thereafter, the Society's focus was increasingly diverted towards other displaced and marginalised groups, in particular, the Griqua peoples along the Middle Orange River. Nonetheless, while the historical interaction between the LMS and the San is often associated with these early disappointments – most notably the failure of the Sak River mission – these should not be regarded as representative of the relations between the two.

¹¹⁰ See the letter by Vos in the Introduction.

¹¹¹ Therefore, Philip got it wrong when he stated that "The situation chosen by Mr. Kicherer was found convenient, and the happiest effects were felt during the continuance of his institution, which was abandoned for no cause but pecuniary difficulties." See J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 15. Arie Vos reported to the Directors of the LMS that "Even for money we can get no sheep."

¹¹² A. Vos, 15 January 1806, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 29.

3) 'The Word of God in the Midst of Them': Successes & Failures, 1806-1820.

"You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, nor shall your land anymore be termed Desolate; but you shall be called Hephzibah, for the Lord delights in you."

Isaiah 62:4

Following the abandonment of the Sak River mission, the resumption of mission efforts among the Cape San only commenced again in 1814. During the intermediate years, the social dissolution of the San communities along the north-eastern frontier zone continued apace. The reputation of the London Missionary Society among the settlers and authorities of the Cape Colony also underwent significant change in the course of this time. As the Society's representatives at the Cape courted influence in colonial politics, so they became increasingly unpopular with the settlers in particular. So much so that the Rev. John Campbell was requested by the Society to tour the Cape in 1813, in order to visit the various LMS mission stations and to assess the state of the Society's mission work in the Colony and make recommendations for improving its reputation and functioning.

In spite of Campbell's tour, the LMS continued to face problems of internal dissension and deteriorating relations with the Cape government during the period in which the renewed mission project to the San was undertaken. The following discussion will locate the founding of the two new San mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah, in 1814 and 1816 respectively, within the context of the changing colonial landscape, which resulted in mounting pressures upon the San communities of the north-eastern Cape interior, as well as within the context engendered by a troubled London Missionary Society. Firstly, the effects of the advancing, and closing, frontier on the San's ever diminishing territory during this time will be considered. In the attempt to account for the relative successes of the new mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah, the colonial factors that were inducing a 'social crisis' among the San require much attention. Secondly, the increasing political involvement of the LMS missionaries Johannes Van der Kemp and James Read in the years immediately prior to the founding of these mission stations led to a compounding of settler antagonism towards the Society and its mission institutions. In addition, a strenuous relationship with the Cape government also ensued. As such, the outcomes of the changing orientation of the LMS' mission in the Cape Colony in the years preceding the resumed 'work' among the Cape San were to have a direct bearing upon the short-lived tenure of Toornberg and Hephzibah.

3.1) The Closing Frontier: Reasons & Responses

The Khoikhoi of the south-western Cape experienced an early and rapid disintegration of their socio-cultural integrity and economic independence, which was already evident during the early 18th century. By 1705, there were Khoikhoi working on farms in the Stellenbosch district.¹ Dispossessed of their land and cattle, there were few other options open to them for their survival. During the course of the century, numerous Khoikhoi did flee northwards to escape the debilitating effects of the expanding settler economy, based on the privatisation of the land and its water sources. Accompanied by 'Bastaards' and 'Bastaard-Hottentots' also seeking to flee the social constraints of the Colony, these remnant communities edged further and further into the interior, northwards towards Namaqualand and the Orange River Valley.

In contrast, the disintegration of the San – that is, the total undermining of the San's means to remain independent – occurred much later and took much longer. The breakdown in the patron-client relationships that were maintained between the Khoikhoi and the San prior to the collapse of the Khoikhoi's pastoralism would have resulted in growing limitations upon the San's access to cattle and sheep for food. Reasons for the ever-increasing incidents of San stock theft during the late 18th century should also be sought within this process. In addition, the steady northward movement of the remnants of Khoikhoi groups, along with deserting 'Bastaards' and 'Bastaard-Hottentots', villains and vagabonds, and, of course, the trekboers, restricted the San's transhumant patterns, confining them to the more arid regions to the north and north-east of the interior escarpment.

The natural features of the environment in which the San were to find any prospects for retaining their independence as nomadic hunter-gatherers in a way stemmed the tide of the advancing frontier. Combined with their resistance to the encroachments of the trekboers during the late 18th century, the San stalled the northward momentum of the Colony. So much so, that the government in Cape Town resorted to placing restrictions upon trekboer incursions beyond the official boundaries of the Colony in the hope that such a measure would stem the tide of violence that pervaded the north-eastern frontier region.² Owing to the widespread dispersal of the outlying farming communities, as well as

¹ R. Ross "*Adam Kok's Griquas*" p. 12.

² For example, see the discussion above of Lord Macartney's Proclamation of 1798, which assigned a tract of land beyond the Sak River, towards the Kareeberg, to the San, which was to be respected by the *veldwachtmeesters* and trekboers alike. In keeping with the dominant trend of the time, legislation passed in Cape Town was rarely adhered to in the far, outlying districts of the Colony.

the physical distances involved between Cape Town, the local *veldcornets*, and the trekboer settlements, these restrictions were seldom enforced. In spite of both the San's resistance and the unfavourable environment of the north-eastern interior, owing to poor rain and limited water sources, the frontier, with the Colony in tow, was not to be stayed from reaching beyond the San, destined for the prize that lay further north – the Orange River Valley.

The Orange River Valley stretching from Namaqualand in the west to north of the Graaf-Reinet district in the east, became an area of retreat and refuge for diverse population groups from the late 18th century onwards.³ Lying beyond the dry interior enclosed by the Roggeveld, Nieuweveld and Sneeuwberg mountain ranges to the south and the Orange River itself to the north, the region became increasingly populated by mixed communities. It was from the ranks of these mixed groups that the likes of the Griqua people emerged in the early 19th century. The consolidation of the Griqua people into political entities, or captaincies, played a crucial role in the long-term viability of the San missions of the third phase of LMS activity, between 1820 and 1833. Owing to the unfavourable nature of the environment that had to be traversed in order to reach the Orange River Valley, the region was spared concerted European settlement until the 1820s. From that time on, the region began to exhibit all the signs of a frontier zone – at least a frontier zone in which the primary actors were of European descent on the one side and of indigenous descent on the other.

However, prior to the arrival of numerous trekboers in the region, who in keeping with processes revealed in the more southern reaches of the Cape interior in previous years, brought the frontier with them, the extent of cultural contact and exchanges between the mixed-race groups and the San along the Orange River Valley north of 'Bushmanland' certainly constituted a frontier zone in itself. As a zone of interaction between various cultures, this pre-settler frontier placed pressures upon the San communities of the region comparable to those encountered further south towards the Colony. The San were at times treated with disdain by the Grikwas and Korana similar to that demonstrated by the colonists and with equally devastating consequences for those San kraals who stole cattle from them. Missionaries travelling through the region of the Middle Orange River in the 1810s and

³ See T. Dederling "*Hate the Old and Follow the New: Khoekhoe and Missionaries in Early Nineteenth Century Namibia*", as well as N. Penn "*The Orange River Frontier Zone, c. 1700-1805*" In A. Smith (ed.) "*Einiqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier*".

1820s noted the extent of hostility that existed between the Korana and San.⁴ For example, missionary Corner of the LMS was unable to establish a mission to the San in the vicinity of Griquatown due to the scale of enmity that existed between the Korana and San.⁵ The Korana were also alleged to have “murdered many Bushesmen” in the vicinity of Campbell during the early 1820s.⁶

Nonetheless, as with the European farmers to the south, the San also engaged with these mixed-race groups on peaceful terms. Indeed, when referring to these mixed-race or multi-ethnic groups along the Middle Orange River, the San are to be included, along with the likes of Khoikhoi, Nama, Korana and Tswana. Members of heretofore distinct San communities were beginning to be acculturated into the ranks of the mixed-race population emerging in the region. The mission stations established to the north and south of the Middle Orange River during the 1810s and 1820s were inhabited by members from these various racial/ethnic groups; often the missionaries would record the numbers of people in attendance at the worship services and in several instances it was noted that San and Korana sat side by side.

This points towards the extent to which the San communities were dispersed throughout the north-eastern interior. Hostilities between scattered San kraals and Korana settlements in one part of the region failed to counter amiable relations between San and Korana in another part of the region. Of course the mission station acted as one of the primary means through which the acculturation of these formerly distinct population groups into mixed-race social amalgams occurred. For example, the mission community assembled at Klaarwater under the tutelage of William Anderson was made up of Kora and San in addition to those Khoikhoi descendants who identified themselves as Griqua from the time of Campbell’s visit to the station in 1813. In a letter to John Campbell written in January 1814, Anderson reported that since Campbell’s departure from the mission, numbers had been “awakened to a concern about the Lord’s salvation of their souls.” He also emphasised that the “Corrainas and Boschesmen” were eager to have missionaries appointed to teach them – “I am glad

⁴ Indeed, as Penn has rightly pointed out, “... the river was a zone of environmental and human interaction long before the colonial period.” *“The Orange River Frontier Zone, c. 1700-1805”* In A. Smith (ed.) *“Einiqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier”* p. 23.

⁵ W. Corner, 2 September 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 77.

⁶ Author Unknown, 16 October 1822, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 111.

to find that the Corrainas and Boschesmen to whom I promised to find missionaries, are longing for them. This is encouraging. Let us praise the Lord.”⁷

That the Korana and San were “longing” for missionaries to establish mission stations among them confirms that in spite of their geographical detachment from the south-western Cape and the advancing colonial frontier, the benefits of inviting missionaries to found mission stations within the region were not lost on them. The strengthening of the colonial order in the south-western Cape during the preceding century resulted in positioning the mission stations founded during the early 19th century as places of refuge for those dispossessed of land and livestock and forced into labour on the burgeoning colonial farms. Many of the members of the mixed-race communities growing along the Middle Orange River at the time had either fled the Western Cape themselves, or were descendants from colonial escapees who had fled earlier. Thus, the potential for the missionaries to act as influential intermediaries with the Cape government on their behalf would have been widely appreciated.

However, the comments made by the likes of William Anderson with regards to an increasing concern for the “salvation of their souls” among the mission residents at Klaarwater cannot simply be discarded as written in the spirit of zealous naivety. Societies in a state of flux are certainly more susceptible to adopting new meaning systems and the socio-cultural dynamics at play during the enactment of this process are complex. Yet, the foundational axioms of the Christian faith must have prompted earnest responses from societies such as the San, whose socio-cultural integrity was in serious jeopardy of erosion (and had been for an extended time). As a “symbolic system”, Christianity’s lure to a society in a state of crisis was certainly reinforced by several of Christ’s declarations, such as “the meek shall inherit the earth” and “the persecuted shall inherit the kingdom of heaven”.⁸

The systematic undermining of the San’s economic subsistence as hunter-gatherers induced by the advancing frontier inevitably destabilised the group’s identity, whether it was the ‘hunting band’ or a larger affiliation of San families, built upon the basis of kinship ties. The San’s mythical framework would also have undergone alteration as a consequence. Owing to religion, or a mythical belief

⁷ W. Anderson, 6 January 1814, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 62.

⁸ C. Fasolt “History and Religion in the Modern Age” In *History and Theory* 45, 2006, p. 11. Also see the ‘Beatitudes’, Gospel of Matthew, Ch. 5.

system, being “a key source of identity formation and maintenance”, the San’s collective identity would have been weakened in this respect, in addition to the weakening agents of land dispossession and water alienation.⁹ The attraction of Christianity as a new meaning system around which a reorganised collective identity could be asserted underscored the appeal of the mission station. The type of Christianity adopted by the mission residents may not have necessarily corresponded with the intentions of the evangelical missionaries, but of course, certain Christian elements were liable to being appropriated without the entire religion being adopted.¹⁰ This was due to the type of identity sought after by the mission resident, whose personal ‘context’, informed by memory, determined the extent to which he/she was prepared to embrace Christianity. Indeed, “religions are likely to vary in the kind of identity they might encompass, not only because of factors ‘internal’ to the religion, but also as a result of influences pertaining to any given surrounding context.”¹¹ The “context” for the San of the north-eastern interior stemmed from the advancing colonial frontier.

The use of the frontier as an organising concept in order to explain the forces upon and consequences of the competition between these groups for territory and resources can be extended to consider whether or not the ‘open’ and ‘closed’ frontier processes were also at work during this period. It would seem that they were. Certainly by the time that the European travellers in the Transgariep or Transorangia transformed themselves from explorers and traders into settlers from the 1820s onwards, the Griqua captaincies had become a formidable obstacle to their northward advance. The polities that became the Griqua captaincies of the 1820s had already achieved a degree of hegemony over the Middle Orange River in the preceding decade, though less organised politically. This tilted the scales of power in their favour and marked a pre-settler closing of the frontier for the San in this region.

The increasing consolidation of the Griqua communities along the Middle Orange River also restricted the San’s prospects for retreating further inland in the face of continuing trekboer encroachment from the south. Essentially, the frontier for the San in the early 19th century was a frontier with two fronts. In response to the encircling pressures of the ‘closing’ frontier from the

⁹ K. Flanagan “Preface” In S. Coleman & P. Collins (eds.) “*Religion, Identity and Change*” p. 3.

¹⁰ M. Wood “*Kinship Identity and Nonformative Spiritual Seekership*” In S. Coleman & P. Collins (eds.) “*Religion, Identity and Change*” p. 196.

¹¹ K. Flanagan “Preface” In S. Coleman & P. Collins (eds.) “*Religion, Identity and Change*” p. 4.

north and south, the missionaries of the LMS came to fulfil an increasingly influential role in acting as intermediaries on behalf of the San with the Cape Colony.¹²

In the period between the LMS' abandonment of the Sak River mission and the founding of two new San missions in 1814 and 1816, various first-hand accounts of the north-eastern Cape interior and its inhabitants offer valuable insight into the effects of the contemporary colonial processes upon the San communities of the region. Expeditions by the likes of Colonel Richard Collins in 1809, William Burchell in 1812 and the Rev. John Campbell in 1813, produced documentary journals that contain numerous descriptions of their encounters with the San of the north-eastern Cape frontier zone.¹³

Indeed, a number of episodes recorded in Colonel Collins' journal point towards the changing dynamics at work within the San's socio-cultural framework.¹⁴ Travelling northwards from Graaf-Reinet, over the Sneeuweberg, along the Seekoei River to the Orange River, Collins commented on the general state of peaceable relations that existed between the San and the farmers at the time.¹⁵ While some settlers warned the touring party of a few San kraals in the vicinity that continued to be ill-disposed towards them, those San that were encountered by Collins were friendly and amenable to the presence of those who accompanied him. For example, passing a kraal "of about 20 Bosjesmen" on the 31st of January 1809, approximately ten kilometres south of the Orange River, Collins noted that "they seemed much rejoiced at seeing us, and pleased at a few presents which we made them."¹⁶

The appeal of the touring party to the San would have certainly lain within the prospect of receiving gifts. However, it should not be assumed that the gifts sought by the San included only tobacco and alcohol. As Collins observed, the region to the north of the Sneeuweberg had suffered from a debilitating drought for a period of some five or six years, seriously undermining the resources of the land. Owing to the trekboers' incursions into the territory, the San's mobility was curtailed, affording

¹² The role of the missionaries as intermediaries with the Cape authorities also exhibited itself in the relations between the missionaries, the Khoikhoi and the Cape Colony in southern Namibia. See T. Dederer "Khoikhoi and Missionaries in Early Nineteenth Century Southern Namibia: Social Change in a Frontier Zone" In *Kleio* 22, 1990, p. 37.

¹³ The geographical orientation of the study changes slightly at this juncture, focusing on the region lying north of the Graaf-Reinet district, and indeed Graaf-Reinet itself, in a north-easterly direction from the Sak River. The territory under discussion stretches from the Sneeuweberg along the Seekoei River northwards to the Middle Orange River. The Middle Orange River zone is designated as the immediate environs of the Orange River stretching from the Vaal confluence through to Augrabies Falls. The missionary work to be discussed here occurred predominantly in the region south of the Vaal confluence. See A. Smith (ed.) "*Einiqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier*" p. 1.

¹⁴ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 4, Extract of a Journal of a Tour to the North Eastern Boundary, the Orange River, and the Storm Mountains, by Colonel Collins, in 1809.

¹⁵ Ibid p. 329.

¹⁶ Ibid.

them little opportunity to migrate elsewhere in search of food and water. Therefore, it is surprising that a general state of peace existed between the San and the farmers. One could safely assume that due to the drought, the San would have been inclined to steal sheep and cattle from the farmers in order to survive.

The answer to this ambiguity is to be found within the act of gift-giving pursued by the colonists. Although the policy of gift-giving had on the whole broken down in the Sak River region within a few years of its initial implementation in 1798, the practice appears to have survived, or at least was mimicked, among the farmers along the Seekoei River. According to Collins, it was still used as a means of conciliating the San in this region in 1809. He afforded praise to one family in particular, the Van der Walts, who lived along the Seekoei River and who were said to have provided a neighbouring San kraal with 142 head of large game during the course of three months.¹⁷ The positive outcomes of this policy for the farmers, who were less susceptible to San theft and murders as a result, and which appears to have been initiated by the farmers themselves, pleased Collins and led him to lament about the prior treatment of the San by the Commandos, which he asserted had “disgraced the name of Christian”.¹⁸ His approval of the effects of this more liberal approach in maintaining amiable relations with the San resonates in his general recommendations for ensuring continued peace with them.¹⁹

Moreover, the actions of the Van der Walts at a time when Commando activity in the northern reaches of the Graaf-Reinet district was continuing apace highlight the complexities imbued in the relations between the farmers and the indigenous population along the north-eastern frontier during the early 19th century. As Newton-King has rightly asserted, “we need to pay closer attention to... the internal dynamics of individual frontier households, if we are to understand the direction taken by

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid p. 333. See the discussion by N. Penn, “*Fated to Perish*” In P. Skotnes (ed.) “*Miscast*”, as well as the discussion by J. Wright in his work “*The Bushman Raiders of the Drakensberg*” p. 27. While Wright alludes to the way this new, more conciliatory approach also served to weaken the San by tying them into relations of dependence upon the colonial farmers, Penn has pointed out that the government’s adoption of gift-giving undermined the San’s readiness to resist the forces of colonial dispossession. Driven to resist the Colony’s advance due to the constraints it placed upon their means to survive off the land, the acts of gift-giving provided for their temporary subsistence, while still effecting land dispossession and water alienation. The dependence of the San on the goodwill of the farmers served to facilitate their peaceful incorporation as an underclass into the Colony. Penn argues that in this way, peace for the San was just as detrimental to their cultural integrity and independence as the preceding thirty years of violence had been.

¹⁹ Collins’ tour was undertaken in order to investigate the state of affairs in the north-eastern parts of the Colony and to make proposals concerning the maintenance of peace between the settlers and the indigenous inhabitants of the region.

social conflict in the outlying districts.”²⁰ Indeed, the acts of gift-giving employed by the Van der Walts were directed towards a particular San kraal in the vicinity of the family’s farm. While this kraal was incorporated into the Colony by its dependence upon the goodwill of the frontier farmer for survival, other kraals in the region would have been forcefully incorporated into the Colony through the actions of the Commandos. Those members of such kraals that weren’t killed would have been captured and incorporated as labourers on the colonial farms. San kraals would have been aware of this and would have responded in turn. After all, Collins reported that “The Bosjesmen are well acquainted with the individual character of the farmers in their neighbourhood.”²¹ He argued that the future appointment of *veldcornets* in the outlying districts should be coordinated with this in mind.

Observing that the San were dispersed over a vast tract of country, “in small parties unconnected with each other”, Collins believed that the task of incorporating the San into the Colony would be a relatively straightforward one, compared to the task of ameliorating the much larger, politically consolidated Xhosa for example – “they may therefore be safely introduced into the Colony, collected and instructed in institutions, and dispersed among the inhabitants.”²² These recommendations are telling in that the intentions underpinning them are clearly to incorporate the San into the Colony as labourers and to remove the scattered San communities of the region as an obstacle to the northward progression of the settlers. Those tracts of country in the north of the Graaf-Reinet district that had been abandoned some ten years earlier due to San attacks had been repopulated “as far as the limits” of the Colony.²³ Trekboer movement further north of the official boundary was inevitable as the farmers themselves competed for pasturage and water, seeking out those patches of land that afforded the farmer a state of independence much sought after.

With regards to the “institutions” to which Collins makes reference, it is not clear what the nature of these institutions was expected to be. Nonetheless, he did note that there were several spots along his route that would be most favourable for the establishment of mission stations, naming Slange

²⁰ S. Newton-King “*The Enemy Within the Struggle for Ascendancy on the Cape Eastern Frontier, 1760-1800*” p. 83. Sadr has also noted that relations between the San and the Bantu varied from place to place and from time to time. A similar state of affairs was very much characteristic of relations between the San and other groups in other parts of southern Africa, including the colonial farmers and the Khoikhoi along the length and breadth of the Cape frontier. See K. Sadr “Kalahari Archaeology and the Bushman Debate” In *Current Anthropology* 38, 1997.

²¹ D. Moodie “*The Record*”, Collins’ Report on the Bosjesmen, p. 36.

²² British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 4, Extract of a Journal of a Tour to the North Eastern Boundary, the Orange River, and the Storm Mountains, by Colonel Collins, in 1809, p. 343.

²³ Ibid p. 344.

Fontein and Groot Fontein in particular.²⁴ The positive reputation still maintained by the missions at the Cape at this time led Collins to enthuse that it was “expedient to multiply these useful establishments.”²⁵ As it turned out, a hiatus of some five years occurred before mission stations to the San in the region under discussion were founded. By the time that they were, the reputation of the London Missionary Society in particular had changed rather dramatically. The altered relations between the LMS and the Cape government which emerged, as well as increasing settler antagonism towards the Society and its institutions, were to have a significant influence upon the likelihood of the success of the renewed San mission project in the decade that followed Collins’ tour.

Nonetheless, it must be recognised from Collins’ encounters with the San of the north-eastern Cape interior that they had undergone, and were continuing to undergo, considerable socio-cultural transformations. The general state of peace that existed between the San and the farmers in the region indicates that the San’s prospects of resisting trekboer encroachment had been dealt a blow in the intermediate years between their major offensives of the late 18th century and Collins’ tour in 1809. The debilitating effects of the extended drought that the region suffered during the early 19th century certainly compounded the precariousness of their independence, and the success of the settlers’ policy of giving supplies to the San to sustain them during the drought could only have been realised if the San acknowledged that any alternatives for their survival were limited.

The drought would have also forced the San communities to splinter off into smaller groups; more appropriate social structures for surviving off the meagre resources of the land.²⁶ This would have undermined their ability to put up a collective resistance to the advance of the frontier. Indeed, the peaceable state of affairs referred to in Collins’ account suggests that the frontier had begun to close around the San of the north-eastern interior.²⁷ The frontier farmers, in being able to consolidate their hold on the limited water sources and favourable pasturage of the region, were by this time steadily tilting the balance of power in their favour. For the purposes of deconstructing the subsequent

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Excessive hunting by the colonists also resulted in the steady demise of the amount of game available for the San to hunt. As such, the debilitating effects of the drought upon the resources of the land that the San were accustomed to gathering was compounded by the growing scarcity of game that made hunting all the more problematic. See P.J. Van der Merwe “*Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere Voor die Groot Trek*” p.x. 74-75.

²⁷ It is noteworthy that in his report, Collins suggested that the motivation behind the San’s depredations against the farmers was “plunder, not murder”. He suggested that once the farmers adopted the practice of gift-giving, the plunder stopped. Quoted in P.J. Van der Merwe “*Die Noordwaartse Beweging van die Boere Voor die Groot Trek*” p. 82.

successes and failures of the San mission project coordinated by the LMS in the region between the Graaf-Reinet district in the south and the Orange River in the north, the systematic closing of the north-eastern frontier around these communities by the time that these mission stations were established must be recognised.

Along with the steady closing of the frontier in this region came increasing instances of San exposure to colonial or Western influences. Likewise, this would have contributed to cultural adaptations on the part of the San, in addition to those that were forced upon them by the undermining of their economic means of subsistence. With the prospects of retreating further northward beyond the Orange River, in response to the tide of trekboer encroachment from the south, curtailed by the increasing numbers of mixed-race or 'Bastaard' communities along the Middle Orange River during the course of the early 19th century, the San were being squeezed into adopting new means of survival – such as relying upon the goodwill of the Seekoei River farmers, or resorting to engaging in new patron-client relations, now with the farmers instead of the Khoikhoi. While some San entered into the service of the colonists as reliable, and even sought after, travel guides, numerous others acted as herders.²⁸

Commissioner Reyneveldt observed in 1812 that while numerous "Bosjesmen" were living with the farmers, serving as herders, there were still "whole kraals of Bosjesmen, some of whom, according to their custom, went daily round the fields to look for food."²⁹ This indicates that although numbers of San had entered into the service of the farmers, there were still opportunities open to them to subsist off the land in their traditional manner. This was conducive to the establishment of patron-client relations with the farmers in the Graaf-Reinet district. Though still maintaining a degree of independence, the San's engagement in these patron-client relations reconfirms that their independent means of survival were diminishing.

The endurance of these relatively passive relations with the settlers engendered cultural adaptations among the San just as the hostile years of San attacks and Boer Commandos would have done so. One of William Burchell's encounters with a San kraal in March 1812, just south of the Orange River in the direction of Graaf-Reinet, to where he was headed, points towards a notable dimension

²⁸ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 7, Extract from Mr. C.J. Reyneveldt's Report of the Commission of Circuit to Lieut. General Sir J.F. Cradock, Cape of Good Hope, 28 Feb. 1812, p. 407.

²⁹ Ibid p. 407.

of such cultural adaptations, namely San leadership. Burchell refers to a one Kaabi as the “chief” of the kraal, who wore a white hat – “whether it was the vanity of giving himself a more important character in my sight, or the desire of paying a compliment by proving that he admired and valued the dress of white-men, which induced him to dress different from all the inhabitants of the village, I could not ascertain; but I am more disposed to regard the former as his real motive.”³⁰

However, Burchell failed to assume that Kaabi’s “white hat” may have served as a re-affirmation of his position of authority among the inhabitants of the kraal. The incident clearly demonstrates that in response to increasing colonial pressures, San “chiefs” or leaders were emerging from the cultural transformations taking place within San communities. Although the degree of authority exercised by “chiefs” such as Kaabi, or Vigilant and Slaparm of the Sak River region, should not be regarded as analogous to that of the hereditary chieftaincies of the Xhosa or Khoikhoi for example, the need for certain members of the kraal to negotiate with trekboers or explorers deemed it necessary to produce suitable representatives. Kaabi’s “white hat” suggests Western exposure and this may have induced the members of the kraal to acknowledge him as a pseudo-chief or captain.

Similarly, an incident recorded by the Rev. John Campbell in June of 1813 also points towards transformations within the political organisation of San kraals. Along the southern banks of the Orange River, Campbell and his touring party came across members of a San kraal who lived in the vicinity and who assisted them in crossing the River. Campbell recorded that “the Chief” of the kraal “wore a hat, a short blue coat, and skin trowsers.”³¹ The ‘Chief’s’ inclination towards wearing Western clothing is indicative of the cultural adaptations underway among the San. In addition, of course, to his position as ‘chief’. His attire served to separate him from the other members of the kraal, who “wore only sheepskin cloaks, loosely thrown over them.”³² Furthermore, the ‘chief’ could speak Dutch. The extent of his exposure to Western or colonial culture and language is in fact accounted for by Campbell, noting that he “once resided at the Klaar Water settlement, which he left in order to have two wives, which is not permitted at the institution.”³³ It is also notable that the kraal possessed several head of oxen, upon which the ‘chief’ rode along with other members of the community.

³⁰ H.C. Notcutt (ed.) “*Selections from Travels in the Interior of Southern Africa by William J. Burchell*” p. 84.

³¹ J. Campbell “*Travels in South Africa, Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society*” 1815, p. 153.

³² Ibid p.x. 153-154.

³³ Ibid p. 154. The mission settlement at Klaarwater was founded in 1807. It was administered by William Anderson at the time of Campbell’s tour of the Colony. The name of the settlement was subsequently changed to Griquatown.

During the evening of the 1st of June 1813, James Read, who had accompanied Campbell on his journey northwards to Klaarwater, asked the ‘chief’ whether or not he was familiar with the Sneeu Berg, to which the ‘chief’ replied that he was. Read then asked the ‘chief’ to guess how long he thought the journey from the Sneeu Berg to the banks of the Orange River had taken them. Believing that the journey would have taken approximately two months, the ‘chief’ was surprised to discover that it had only taken the touring party twelve days – “he had no conception that he had been living so near the colony.”³⁴

Thus, the Western influence so evident in the person of the ‘chief’ must have stemmed from his stay at Klaarwater. His ignorance of how close his kraal was to the Colony in travelling time suggests that Campbell’s touring party, along with the touring parties of the likes of Col. Collins and William Burchell, were among the first concerted European attempts to explore and open up the Orange River Valley region, along with the missionaries that had preceded them. It also suggests that the kraal described by Campbell only seldom came into contact with Europeans from the Colony, other than missionaries and traders. As such, the region still maintained a degree of protection from the debilitating effects of the advancing frontier to the south. Trekboer encroachment into the region would still take several years to transpire.

Living along the banks of the Middle Orange River would also have brought the San kraal under discussion into contact with other communities, notably the Korana.³⁵ The interaction between the San and the Korana is significant in that cultural influences between the two were inevitable. This may also account for various cultural adaptations on the part of the San (such as the adoption of Western attire by the ‘chief’ and the acquisition of cattle), as the Korana were relatively Westernised due to their trading contacts with the Colony. Indeed, contemporary observers had little difficulty in distinguishing between the Korana and the San. At the evening worship service conducted among the inhabitants of the kraal on the 2nd of June, Campbell expressed his surprise at the large number of people that were present, coming from various directions in the vicinity. He estimated that there were “about thirty Bushmen and Corannes” in attendance.³⁶

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ The Korana are widely regarded as having been Khoikhoi pastoralists who had migrated north to the Middle Orange River during the late 18th century. Owing to the trading relations which they maintained with frontier colonists, they acquired guns and horses. This positioned the Korana as a dominant population group along the Middle Orange River for much of the early 19th century.

³⁶ J. Campbell “*Travels in South Africa, Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society*” 1815, p. 155.

Some final observations recorded by Campbell during his journey through ‘Bushmanland’ offer useful insight into the reputation that missionaries held among various scattered groups of San at the time. In mentioning their intention to send “teachers to their nation”, a number of San kraals with which Campbell’s touring party came into contact expressed their gladness and “willingness to join any mission” that might be established among them.³⁷ The reaction of one young man in particular made an impression on Campbell. After listening to “Boozak” – one of the Khoikhoi converts from Bethelsdorp who had accompanied Campbell and Read on the journey, along with Cupido Kakkerlak – preach for about two hours, the young man declared “From what I have just heard, I feel as if I were a new man... I wonder that God has preserved me from lions, tigers, and elephants, which I have encountered, that I might hear the things which I have been told today.”³⁸ It is, however, not clear whether the young man was a San or a Korana.

Nonetheless, his personal eagerness, along with the general receptivity of the various groups encountered by the touring party, towards the missionaries and the prospect of having a mission station established among them, indicates that they were well aware of the benefits of having a resident missionary in their midst. The similar expressions of delight made by an old ‘Bushman’ who lived in the rocks of a *koppie*, some distance away from any other San or Korana kraals, also implies that, although dispersed over a vast territory, news of the missionaries and their mission stations was well known among numerous San living in the region.³⁹

Furthermore, the socio-cultural mixing of the San and Korana at the worship service confirms that upon the establishment of the promised mission stations, the creation of a mixed-race community was inevitable. Regardless of the LMS’ intentions to minister specifically to the San, the territory in which the so-called San mission stations were subsequently founded, was inhabited by a variety of population groups, including San, Korana and other ‘Bastaards’. As with the failure of the Sak River mission, this feature of the socio-cultural make-up of the mission communities at Toornberg and Hephzibah must be kept in mind when assessing the reasons for their closure.

Yet, prior to discussing the establishment of Toornberg and Hephzibah, and dealing directly with this middle phase of mission work among the San, it is necessary to have a brief discussion of some of

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid p. 137.

the dilemmas that were facing the LMS at the Cape at the time. Indeed, the very reason for Campbell's tour is to be found within the troubled state of the Society, brought about by an increasing political involvement on the part of two of its most prominent representatives in the Colony.

3.2) Upsetting the Colonial Apple Cart: Van der Kemp & Read

The claims of ill-treatment of Khoikhoi and San labourers at the hands of the colonial farmers made by Van der Kemp and Read in 1811 challenged the widely held view of the Cape authorities that relations between the farmers and the indigenous populace were on the whole good-natured and much improved than during the era of interchanging British and Dutch administration at the turn of the century. As discussed, this view had been asserted by Col. Collins, who also portrayed the extent of hostility between those San communities that had remained independent, or had not yet been drawn into the colonial labour network, and the farmers as peaceable. A far cry from the state of affairs that was common at the time of Barrow's tour at the end of the 18th century.

This view was also reinforced by Commissioner Reyneveldt in his report to the Governor, Sir John Cradock, concerning the findings of the Commission of Circuit conducted in 1812 in order to investigate the claims made by Van der Kemp and Read. With regards to the region of the Sneeuberg, Koup and Nieuweveld, Reyneveldt asserted "peace and quiet reigned everywhere."⁴⁰ He went on to state that "the Bosjesmen at present live at perfect peace with the inhabitants, and even that they serve them faithfully in taking care of their cattle."⁴¹ The reason forwarded for this amiable state of relations in the region was attributed to the "good treatment" of the San by the farmers. Reyneveldt went further to suggest that the conciliatory approach adopted by the farmers had served to induce a greater awareness of the benefits of herding livestock among the San, noting that a few kraals in the region had acquired "small flocks of goats."

The impetus behind the Commission of Circuit lay with Van der Kemp and Read, who began to call into question the legitimacy of the colonial government's representation of social conditions at the Cape by raising awareness of the deplorable conditions under which Khoikhoi and San farm

⁴⁰ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 7, Extract from Mr. C.J. Reyneveldt's Report of the Commission of Circuit to Lieut. General Sir J.F. Cradock, Cape of Good Hope, 28 Feb. 1812, p. 407.

⁴¹ Ibid.

labourers suffered.⁴² Inspired by the rising influence of humanitarian evangelicalism in western Europe during the early 19th century, the missionaries became increasingly critical of the treatment of farm labourers, and indeed the indigenous inhabitants in general, whether employed on the colonial farms or not. The re-occupation of the Cape by the British in 1806 evoked a greater sense of confidence in them and Van der Kemp and Read soon after embarked on collecting and recording stories of abuse and maltreatment experienced by Khoisan⁴³ farm workers. The submission of their report to the Cape government in 1811, just months prior to Van der Kemp's passing, demanded a response from the colonial administration, thus resulting in the Commission of Circuit.

This early liberal drive embarked upon by Van der Kemp and Read was to prove most damaging to Read in particular, but also to the wider mission project of the LMS at the Cape. Following the death of Van der Kemp and the release of the findings of the Commission in early 1813, Read came under increasing fire as his administration of Bethelsdorp was called into question by the antagonistic settlers, the Cape government and members of the LMS itself. The findings of the Commission whitewashed the state of race relations in the Colony and "clearly sided with the white inhabitants."⁴⁴ Of much concern to the Directors of the LMS was the Commission's criticism of Bethelsdorp as a place of "laziness and idleness."⁴⁵ It was decided that a reliable representative of the Society had to embark on a tour of the LMS' mission stations to assess their condition and make recommendations for their improvement.

The 'Order of the Directors' of the LMS worded the reasoning for Campbell's tour of inspection in diplomatic terms, stating that the decision to send him was due to a need for one of the Society to "personally inspect the different settlements" and to ensure that the "great end proposed" was achieved, namely "the conversion of the heathen, keeping in view at the same time the promotion of their civilisation."⁴⁶ Even so, the Society appreciated the scale of the dilemma facing their institutions at the Cape. Under the approval of Sir John Cradock, Governor of the Cape, Campbell

⁴² S. Trapido "The Emergence of Liberalism and the Making of 'Hottentot Nationalism', 1815-1834" In University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, *Societies in Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Collected Seminar Papers*, Vol. 17, 1992. See also the discussion by M. Streak "The Afrikaner as Viewed by the English" p.x. 58-59.

⁴³ By the early 19th century, the racial composition of the farm-working community of the Colony was mixed and San had been incorporated into its ranks.

⁴⁴ J. Wells "The Scandal of Rev James Read and the Taming of the London Missionary Society by 1820" In *South African Historical Journal*, 42, 2000, p. 143.

⁴⁵ G.M. Theal "Records of the Cape Colony" Vol. 9, 'Report of Commission' p. 74.

⁴⁶ J. Campbell "Travels in South Africa, Undertaken at the Request of the Missionary Society" 1815, p. vi.

proceeded first to Bethelsdorp at the end of 1812. From there he then undertook his journey into the northern interior, during which time the encounters he and the Rev. James Read had with various San kraals and individuals referred to in the text above occurred.⁴⁷

While the likes of Collins and Reyneveldt had indeed encountered amiable relations between the farmers and the San, such as those observed between the Van der Walts and a San kraal along the Seekoei River, Commandos and expeditions against the San within and beyond most of the outlying districts continued nonetheless. Between April 1813 and November 1820, the official number of “Bosjesmen” killed by Commandos despatched from the Drostdy of Graaf-Reinet alone stood at 84 (approximately 140 had been taken prisoner).⁴⁸ As these are ‘official’ numbers, it can be safely assumed that the actual number of those killed was much higher. The justification for these continuing expeditions against the San, and other marginalised groups that subsisted off the ‘bush’, was the ongoing incidents of theft within the district, often of horses and cattle. The record for July 1816 states the expedition undertaken during that month was in “pursuit of kraals which had committed various depredations and murders.”⁴⁹ Thus indicating that while the extent of violence between the outlying farming and indigenous communities had been reduced compared to twenty years earlier, San theft and settler Commandos still occurred in reaction to each other.

It was within this context that the renewed mission project to the San was undertaken by the LMS. While Campbell had been successful in reassuring Governor Cradock of the “merits of the missionary enterprise” during his stay in the Colony, internal diffusion within the LMS continued.⁵⁰ Campbell’s appeasement of the Governor also did not placate settler antagonism towards the Society. During the course of the next several years, a series of events heightened the precariousness of the LMS’ position at the Cape. Firstly, the British government’s legal impositions upon the farmers with regards to their power over Khoikhoi labour, enacted in the Caledon Code of 1809, along with the Commission of Circuit of 1812, led to increasing resentment of the British administration among the farming community generally, but especially in the outlying eastern districts.⁵¹ The rising hostility

⁴⁷ James Read had assumed the superintendency of the LMS at the Cape upon the death of Johannes Van der Kemp in December 1811.

⁴⁸ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 6, Reports and Papers relating to Depredations of, and Expeditions against, the Bushmen, in the Districts of Graaf-Reinet, Cradock, Beaufort, Worcester and Clanwilliam, p. 350.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ J. Wells “The Scandal of Rev James Read and the Taming of the London Missionary Society by 1820” In *South African Historical Journal*, 42, 2000, p. 146.

⁵¹ C. Crais “The Making of the Colonial Order” p. 59.

towards the entrenchment of British values at the Cape was most evident in the Slagter's Nek rebellion of 1815.⁵² This did not bode well for the LMS' institutions, which were widely regarded as places of refuge for Khoisan that were much needed as labour.

Secondly, Read's impregnation of a 16-year-old girl at Bethelsdorp in 1816 resulted in further internal turmoil for the LMS. Read's style of ministry came under increasing scrutiny as disgruntled missionaries demanded a new approach to the coordination of mission work in the Cape. Read and Van der Kemp had tolerated indigenous expressions of Christianity and allowed those members of the mission community who faltered when it came to adhering to scripturally acceptable lives to remain at the mission station. Both had also taken Khoikhoi wives. Doug Stuart argues that the 'James Read sex scandal' provided those missionaries who were dissatisfied with the approach of Van der Kemp and Read – favouring a more colonial method that met with the expectations of settler society and the rising significance of the free-labour narrative – with the grounds to re-orientate the focus and implementation of LMS activities at the Cape.⁵³

Figures at the forefront of this pro-colonial agenda such as George Thom and Robert Moffat were ardent adherents of the belief in European superiority and they were disapproving of those missionaries who failed to inculcate the benefits of European civilisation among their congregants. They also expected missionaries to keep "firm boundaries between themselves and the people they served."⁵⁴ The actions of Van der Kemp and Read in marrying women from the indigenous community were looked upon with the utmost disdain.⁵⁵ Without maintaining a clear distinction between themselves and their mission residents, including those who had been converted, the very essence of the 'civilising' project was regarded as being jeopardised.⁵⁶

These internal divisions within the LMS at the Cape – neatly encapsulated by Julia Wells into syncretistic and Eurocentric schools of thought – required urgent attention. In response, the Directors

⁵² M. Streak "The Afrikaner as Viewed by the English" p. 64.

⁵³ D. Stuart "The 'Wicked Christians' and the 'Children of the Mist': Missionary and Khoikhoi Interactions at the Cape in the Early Nineteenth Century" In University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, *Societies in Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Collected Seminar Papers*, Vol. 18, 1992.

⁵⁴ J. Wells "The Scandal of Rev James Read and the Taming of the London Missionary Society by 1820" In *South African Historical Journal*, 42, 2000, p. 138.

⁵⁵ See J. Wells "The Suppression of Mixed Marriages among LMS Missionaries in South Africa before 1820" In *South African Historical Journal*, 44, 2001.

⁵⁶ John Campbell also criticised Van der Kemp for taking a wife from the indigenous community, stating that the missionary had begun to imitate the 'natives' in his way of life as a result. See J. Campbell "Travels in South Africa; Narrative of a Second Journey" Vol. 1, p. 248.

sent the Rev. John Campbell once again to intervene and seek a sustainable resolution to the predicament. On his return voyage to the Cape in 1819 to undertake this task, Campbell was joined by the Rev. John Philip, who was subsequently appointed as the new superintendent of the LMS at the Cape.

Without wanting to get too far ahead of the story, several of the recommendations made by Philip and Campbell for the improvement of the LMS' mission institutions reveal much about the changing nature of the Society and the implementation of its 'Christianising' project during this time. The tour of inspection undertaken by Philip and Campbell in 1820 led the Reverends to assert that a "complete change of system in the future management of our missions in this part of the world" was necessary.⁵⁷ A common thread running through their general observations of the state of the LMS' mission institutions was what they regarded as the 'uniqueness' of the mission field at the Cape and the challenges that this posed to the missionaries sent to the Colony to undertake the 'good work'. In their report to the Directors of the Society they noted the following:

*"It is a very difficult thing for a Society to legislate for the conducting of missions among an uncivilised people. In countries such as England and India, the office of a missionary is simple and well defined. In the discharge of his office he has only to follow the example of Christ and his apostles, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God; but when the missionary has to reclaim the people when he is sent to instruct from a wandering life, collect them together in villages and elevate them into a state of civilisation, in the management of his arduous undertaking he is left to little more than the fruit of his own observation and experience."*⁵⁸

While Philip and Campbell praised the work of Van der Kemp, they were far less complimentary of Read, referring to him as "the feeble successor of Van der Kemp." In their discussion of Read's administration of Bethelsdorp following the death of Van der Kemp, the two commented that "When the state of things, when the missions were under Read's management is compared with the letters he was in the habit of sending to England, we are not surprised that the colonial government and intelligent persons who observed the contrast were disgusted and offended." They even went so far as to imply that Read was a conniving fraudster, noting for example that "With a few specimens of

⁵⁷ Memorial by J. Philip & J. Campbell, 26 May 1820, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 99.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

fruit from a solitary tree in his own garden, which engaged his exclusive attention, he deceived the public and led us to think that he was covering Africa with groves of the orange tree.”

In their proposals to place the Society’s mission stations once again “upon a respectable footing”, the two placed emphasis on the calibre of the missionary required for the task. They stressed that “the missionaries at the heads of our institutions should be men of talents, of address and possessing a considerable knowledge of human nature.” It was in their opinion that other than Van der Kemp, no other missionary sent to the Cape had come close to achieving these requirements of character. Piety was no longer enough to fulfil the office of a missionary. In addition, Philip and Campbell believed that certain missionaries may have been unsuited to certain mission stations, and were perhaps better suited to other stations. The implications of the actual implementation of their proposals were far-reaching to say the least.

Among “heathen and other unenlightened nations” where “reason is weak and the passions are strong”, the effective implementation of the LMS’ objective to “spread the knowledge of Christ” lay within the person of the missionary for Philip and Campbell. Reaffirming their position, the Reverends referred to the example of the Moravians who appointed “a man venerable for his years, experience and services in the cause of missions” at the head of any new station they established.

However, the probability of their propositions being put into practice were unlikely for while they placed emphasis upon the character of the missionary, they also made frequent references to the need for the Society to save money. The likelihood of persuading the sorts of men that they desired to undertake mission work at the Cape was negated by the Society’s pecuniary difficulties. Yet, while making calls for the ‘ideal missionary’, Philip and Campbell suggested that only a few were needed. Rather than sending missionaries, the Society was also encouraged to send out mechanics to assist the few missionaries that were required to administer the stations.⁵⁹

The need for mechanics, who were intended to possess the practical skills to build up the mission station into a self-sufficient entity, complete with lodgings and irrigation, was for Philip and

⁵⁹ The emphasis Philip and Campbell placed upon the savings the Society could accrue from sending mechanics rather than missionaries into the field also extended to include the LMS’ liability should they die while in service: “Besides the money that would be saved to the Society in the first instance by sending out mechanics instead of missionaries, should they die while in the condition of mechanics, the Society would be under no obligations to provide for their widows and children in the same manner they are obliged to provide for the widows and children of their missionaries.” Memorial by J. Philip & J. Campbell, 26 May 1820, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 99.

Campbell necessary due to what they regarded as the general failure of the efforts that had been made to raise up “native preachers”.⁶⁰ Also, they held that mechanics were less susceptible than missionaries to consider themselves exempt from manual labour. Therefore, they could be useful in the day to day maintenance of the mission station, in addition to assisting the sole missionary required to act as head of the institution in serving the spiritual needs of the residents and in imparting useful skills to them pertaining to the cultivation of the land for instance.

One of the most telling proposals made by Philip and Campbell concerns the religious instruction of the mission community and reveals much about the future functioning of the mission stations envisioned by them. They asserted that “The religious services of some of our institutions should be shortened” and “Two long services everyday and three or four on Sabbath are too much.” They argued that the exhaustive church services and catechisms left little time for fulfilling “public duties”, keeping the mission residents “in a state of childhood.”

The Reverends were determined to alter the general perception of the mission stations as places of indolence held by many in colonial society.⁶¹ The industriousness of the mission inhabitants was to be encouraged and “All vagrants and such as will not work” were to be threatened with exclusion from the settlement. They went on to highlight the point by stating that “The object of these institutions is the *religious instruction and civilisation of the natives, and those people who do not avail themselves of the advantages which they afford for that purpose, should be made to go to the farmers*” (my emphasis).⁶²

The recommendations made by Philip and Campbell highlight the changing approach of the LMS at the Cape concerning its mission agenda. While the conversion of the ‘heathen’ still remained the primary objective, the increasing demands for labour within the Colony were not lost on the two.⁶³ As mentioned, Col. Collins’ recommendations for the establishment of new missions to the San in 1809 were motivated by his desire to see the San incorporated into the Colony as labourers on the trekboer farms. This did not go unnoticed by Philip, who criticised Collins’ support for San missions

⁶⁰ The missionary work of the ‘native preachers’ that had been raised up was particularly evident among the San. See the discussion below pertaining to the missions at Toornberg and Hephzibah.

⁶¹ This perception was reinforced by the Commission of Circuit’s report in 1813.

⁶² Memorial by J. Philip & J. Campbell, 26 May 1820, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 99.

⁶³ See J. Philip “*Researches in South Africa*” Vol. 2, p. 19.

on the grounds of their “civilising effect” only, without taking any “concern for the salvation of their souls.”⁶⁴

It would appear that Philip sought a balance between the “civilising project” and the “Christianising project”. Indeed, Philip, who was to become one of the most influential humanitarians at the Cape during the early 19th century, famously asserted that all people should have the “liberty to bring the produce of their labour to the best market.”⁶⁵ Although a degree of calm was achieved by Philip’s superintendency, the political activity pursued by Van der Kemp and Read a decade prior resulted in a tumultuous time for the LMS at the Cape. The establishment of the first mission stations designed to cater for the San since the abandonment of the Sak River mission in 1806 commenced during this period of upheaval for the Society. It is towards these missions that the discussion now turns its attention.

3.3) A Brief Success: Toornberg & Hephzibah

The use of the term ‘success’ in the abovementioned sub-title requires qualification. It may be argued that ‘success’ for the London Missionary Society among the San along the Middle Orange River and the surrounding territory implies that those San communities were well aware of the precariousness of the situation in which they found themselves and regarded the mission stations as agreeable places of refuge. While useful in assessing the appeal of the mission stations to societies undergoing profound challenges to their cultural integrity and economic independence, such an argument fails to account for the attraction of Christianity to those same communities. Therefore, while the short-lived ‘success’ of the mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah must indeed be understood within the wider colonial context, the expressions of sincere conviction and conversion made by mission residents must not be trampled under the sceptic’s foot.

Yet, the means through which such expressions live on are the private and official letters of correspondence, and personal journals, written by the European missionaries. It would certainly have been in their interest to exaggerate mission numbers in order to portray a successful ‘work’. References to sincere conversions are also problematic. Exaggeration of these numbers would have

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ J. Philip “*Researches in South Africa*” Vol. 1, p. 402. See also Newton-King “*The Labour Market of the Cape Colony, 1807-1828*” In Marks & Atmore (eds.) “*Economy and Society in Pre-Industrial South Africa*” p. 198.

been inevitable for two reasons; firstly, sincere conversion is impossible to measure, in particular, owing to the missionaries' external observation of what is intended to be an internal declaration of faith, and secondly, the very success of a missionary depended upon making converts, so personal pride and legitimation would have played an important role in deciding what number to convey to the addressee.

New attempts to 'Christianise' the San were eventually made. The first of these was at Toornberg, which was commenced in 1814, followed by the mission at Hephzibah in 1816.⁶⁶ Situated further into the interior beyond the official colonial border, in the vicinity of the Middle Orange River, these missions achieved rapid success. Their tenure was however, very short lived. In 1817, the missionaries were recalled to the Colony by the Cape government under the orders of the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset.⁶⁷ In the interim, it was estimated that the combined population of the two missions amounted to one thousand, seven hundred.⁶⁸ Lord Somerset, who took the decision to recall the missionaries, justified doing so on the grounds that having so large a contingent of San so near to the Colony posed a potential threat to the outlying farming communities.⁶⁹ As will be demonstrated, the mission communities were settled at convenient water points on the route to the Orange River and were thus prime targets for the encroaching trekboers.

The successes of Toornberg and Hephzibah during so short a period of time are striking, especially since the territory in which they were founded was beyond the Colony's official boundary at the time. Therefore, the local San still maintained a degree of independence and were by no means in a state of social "dissolution", as the colonial Khoikhoi had been at the time of the commencement of concerted mission activity in the south-western Cape. This also indicates that the "social crisis" explanation espoused by the likes of Elizabeth Elbourne, while useful in understanding the general receptivity of the Khoikhoi to the missionaries in the context of the south-western Cape, should be used with caution in other areas of the Cape mission field. The degree of independence still

⁶⁶ See K. Schoeman "Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Staties Toornberg en Hephzibah, 1814-1818" *South African Historical Journal*, 29, 1993. See Appendices A and B.

⁶⁷ The recall of the missionaries at Toornberg and Hephzibah formed part of a wider colonial campaign at the time intended to reign in the work of the various mission societies at the Cape, including a ban on missionaries working beyond the colonial boundary. The LMS complained that even its missions "in the remote deserts of Namaqualand were not left unmolested" by the actions of the colonial authorities in 1818. CA GH 1/48/669, 4 July 1825.

⁶⁸ J. Philip, "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 21.

⁶⁹ It will be demonstrated that as with the Sak River mission, the mission communities at Toornberg and Hephzibah were 'mixed-race' and not exclusively San. See for example K. Schoeman "Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Staties Ramah, Konnah en Philippolis, 1816-1828" *South African Historical Journal*, 29, p. 136.

preserved at the time by the San within the vicinity of these new mission stations is testified to by the five month abandonment of Toornberg between January and June 1815 by the missionary Erasmus Smit⁷⁰, who felt threatened by the local San.⁷¹ While mission work resumed at Toornberg, this incident is striking in its similarity to events surrounding the first mission to the San. Threats to the safety of the missionaries from the neighbouring San forced the relocation of the mission from Blydevoorzicht Fontein to the Sak River. Likewise, the San communities living beyond the colonial border in the vicinity of Toornberg were also initially hostile and unreceptive.

Nonetheless, in keeping with what has been demonstrated thus far, the colonial boundary should hardly be regarded as having been a fixed line across which no cultural exchanges, most notably violent interaction, occurred. Quite the contrary, as the same processes that had led to the systematic undermining of San culture and independence along the interior escarpment at the time of the founding of the Sak River mission were, by 1814, beginning to impose upon those San communities that had opted to retreat further inland in the attempt to flee the debilitating effects of the advancing frontier.

In September 1816, Read, accompanied by a sizeable entourage that included his wife, Elizabeth, as well as Sabina, the young girl who had fallen pregnant by him, passed by Toornberg⁷² on their way to Griquatown. Their sojourn at the mission station was most pleasing to Erasmus Smit, the resident missionary, who assured the Directors that Read's temporary stay had "conducted great benefit and blessings to the poor Bushmen and settlement."⁷³ Read undertook a number of tasks to improve the condition of the settlement and that of its residents. He even went so far as to rename the institution, believing that the numerous variations of Toornberg – Toverberg, Toorenberg, Thornberg – were unnecessarily confusing. The new name chosen for the mission was Grace Hill, or in the Dutch, Genadeberg.⁷⁴

The members of Read's party also built a dam for water, repaired the kraal for the cattle, and built a house "in order to lodge strangers coming from time to time... among whom there seem to be some

⁷⁰ A common variation of his surname found in contemporary documents is Smith. For the purposes of consistency, Smit has been used throughout the discussion.

⁷¹ K. Schoeman "The Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819" p. 181.

⁷² Located on the site of the modern town of Colesberg, which was established as a settler village in 1830.

⁷³ E. Smit, 17 September 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 77.

⁷⁴ J. Read, 17 September 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 78.

pious boors.”⁷⁵ This reference to “some pious boors” is telling. While no names are given in the missionaries’ records, it would appear that the conciliatory spirit observed by Col. Collins among the likes of the Van der Walts was still alive among certain numbers of the trekboers five years later, in spite of the continuing instances of San stock theft and retaliatory Commandos in the northern reaches of the Graaf-Reinet district.

Following Read’s visit, Smit expressed his joy with regards to the “success of the work of God’s Spirit, particularly in the heart of a Bushman chief and of seven of the Hottentot’s nation, who indeed appear to be converted to Christ and are baptised.”⁷⁶ Yet again, this is a very clear reference to a “Bushman chief”, as well as an indication of the ‘mixed-race’ composition of the mission community at Toornberg. Smit distinguishes between “Bushmen” and “Hottentots” several times in his writings. Though the correlation of these titles to San and Khoikhoi respectively should be treated with caution, that he makes a distinction at all is telling.

With regards to the mission station Hephzibah, its establishment between September and October 1816 was very much unintended. Subsequent to Campbell’s tour of 1813, the LMS’ focus concerning the founding of new mission stations at the Cape was increasingly directed towards the northern Sotho-Tswana, to the north and north-east of Griquatown. This was due to the numerous requests for missions that Campbell and Read received from various African chiefs in this region during their travels through the territory.⁷⁷ The prospects of ministering in these northern chiefdoms were at the forefront of Read’s agenda in later years. In particular, Campbell and Read were eager to establish a mission at Chief Mothibe’s kraal, Dithakong, with a population of approximately one thousand, five hundred. Indeed, it was to the Tlhaping under Chief Mothibe that Read had intended for the ‘native teachers’ to go. Likewise, the missionary assistant, W. Corner, had planned to establish a mission to the Kora under the Chief known as Makoon.⁷⁸

However, Chief Mothibi proved to be a difficult character to persuade, and Makoon was said to be at war with “some of Mr. Anderson’s people”, presumably Griquas from Griquatown.⁷⁹ Therefore, the proposed mission field remained closed to the missionaries for the time being. The founding of

⁷⁵ E. Smit, 17 September 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 77.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ See the discussion by J. Wells “The Scandal of Rev James Read and the Taming of the London Missionary Society by 1820” In *South African Historical Journal*, 42, 2000, p. 146.

⁷⁸ K. Schoeman “*The Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819*” p. 165.

⁷⁹ W. Corner, 2 September 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 77.

Hephzibah was the improvisation. After his party's stay at Toornberg in early September 1816, Read travelled northwards to a site which he had found during his tour with Campbell three years earlier. Read believed that the location, some three days journey from Toornberg, was ideal for the establishment of a mission station.⁸⁰ At the helm of this new undertaking were the 'native teachers' W. Corner, his brother-in-law Jan Goeyman, and Cupido Kakkerlak.

The new missions to the San were the first mission activities embarked upon by these so-called 'native teachers'. Along with the likes of Barend Barends, Pieter Davids and Andries Waterboer, they were 'ordained' as missionary assistants, or 'native agents', by the LMS in August 1814. Toornberg was founded with the assistance of Corner, Goeyman⁸¹ and Kakkerlak the following month. Owing to the personal grievances they experienced with Erasmus Smit at Toornberg, who was said to have been a difficult person to work with, Read saw it fit to reassign them to administer Hephzibah in 1816.

They were to play an influential role in the spreading of the Gospel among the indigenes of the region and beyond the colonial frontier.⁸² For example, Cupido Kakkerlak performed the role of interpreter, being able to converse in San, presumably /Xam (his wife, Anna Vigilant, was San). As with the Sak River mission, any prospects of achieving conversions among the San depended upon interpreters to convey the message. The European missionaries, such as Kicherer and Edwards, complained that the San language was too difficult to learn. Likewise, Van der Kemp and Read also initially relied on interpreters at Bethelsdorp. The number of sermons lost in translation may have induced the more conciliatory approach towards syncretisation adopted by the likes of Van der Kemp and Read.

One of the 'native' missionary assistants that stand out in this study is Jan Goeyman.⁸³ His personal Christian 'walk' from the moment of conviction, to conversion, to falling into sin, to being cast out, in many ways traces the rises and falls of the San mission project at the Cape. Goeyman was baptised while still a child by Johannes Kicherer at the Sak River mission, where his family were mission

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ There are several variations of his name in the surviving records including Goeieman, Goejeman and Goedeman.

⁸² See the article by C. Malherbe "The Life and Times of Cupido Kakkerlak" In *Journal of African History*, 20, 1979, for one of the most comprehensive discussions of Kakkerlak to date.

⁸³ See the discussion by K. Schoeman "Jan Goeyman, 'native teacher', 1814-25" In "The Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819".

residents.⁸⁴ The Goeymans followed Kicherer to Graaf-Reinet at the time that the Sak River mission was abandoned. This was where Jan Goeyman was then appointed as a missionary assistant in 1814 and soon after posted to Toornberg to assist Smit. From there, he went to work at Hephzibah and eventually at Philippolis in the early 1820s. As with Cupido Kakkerlak, Goeyman was commended for his “praiseworthy conduct” by various missionaries that knew him.⁸⁵ He was said to have had “great gifts and knowledge in scripture” which enabled him to deliver “most excellent sermons.”

With no less than three hundred “Bushmen” reported to be living nearby the site of Toornberg, the ‘native teachers’ would regularly set out to locate them and to persuade them to settle at the new mission. At the forefront of this evangelical endeavour was Cupido Kakkerlak, who actively sought out San kraals in the vicinity and who preached to them on the spot where he found them. The series of events that follow were recorded by Read when he left Hephzibah to continue his journey to Griquatown:

Cupido, the Bushesmen interpreter accompanied us, we had a long morning journey to a place where we expected to find a kraal of Bushesmen but were disappointed. Our interpreter and I had rode ____ on horseback and after we had ____ he said what would become of a sinner if God dealt with him as he deserved. After a little conversation he went crying to the mountain to pray. He could not eat, and after stopping a little while at the wagons, he went again to the mountain, and after returning he said that Christ sent him to look for Bushesmen. We travelled on slowly and met Cupido who had joined a large kraal of Bushesmen and made known Christ to them, and they were so pleased that they resolved to proceed to Hephzibah immediately.⁸⁶

Read’s description of the San kraal which Cupido encountered is significant. He remarked that they “did not look so rude” being “dressed like the Corannas” and having the “same kind of houses”, as well as “about 16 head of cattle and about 100 sheep and goats.”⁸⁷ The incidents of peaceful interaction that occurred between the San and the Korana along the length and breadth of the Middle Orange River at this time have been mentioned. The extent of cultural adaptation on the part of this

⁸⁴ That his first and second names were Johannes Jacobus, the same first and second names of Kicherer, suggests that he was named after the missionary.

⁸⁵ J.G. Messer, 1 January 1818, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 89.

⁸⁶ J. Read, 12 November 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 78.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

particular San kraal is nonetheless illuminating – in terms of dress, shelter and the tending of livestock. It is worth considering whether or not it is suitable to regard this community as having been a ‘San’ kraal. While Read believed that the people he had encountered that night were ‘Bushmen’, owing to the distinct “clapping of their tongues”, his comments pertaining to their physical appearance the following morning appear to have been made in surprise.⁸⁸ After all, what Read had expected to see and what had actually met his eyes during daylight led him to comment that they “did not look so rude”. This comment speaks of an unmet expectation.

With the inhabitants of the community being “dressed like the Corannas” and living in the “same kind of houses”, it is feasible to suggest that rather than being a San kraal that had adopted these cultural characteristics of the Korana, the community was ‘mixed’, with both San and Korana subsisting together. This would also account for the kraal’s possession of a large number of livestock. For in spite of the cultural adaptations evident among the Cape San in the region during this time, it is nonetheless unlikely that such a large number of livestock could have been acquired and maintained without contacts with traditional herding groups, such as the Korana.

The response of the members of the kraal to Read’s preaching was most encouraging for him. His description of the reaction of one elderly man in particular is worth recounting here:

I preached to them through the interpreter and an old grey headed man felt so interested that he could not wait till the service was over, but began to talk. The rest tried to silence him by forbidding him and holding their hands before his mouth, but in vain, the old man cried out that his joy was so great that he was spared to hear such news before his death, that he had never heard such things in his life, that if no one else would go he would set off immediately for Hephzibah.⁸⁹

The eagerness demonstrated by these “Bushesmen” to Read’s preaching and his invitation to them to settle at Hephzibah did not, however, blind him from the very strong possibility that their willingness was motivated more by the prospect of material gain than a longing for righteousness – “whether the desire to hear more of the word of God was the object of these poor people or an expectation of getting tobacco must be left to a future day. The love for tobacco is very great. I suppose with a piece as long as my arm I could have collected the whole country of Bushesmen.” Read seems to have

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

grappled with the ethics of enticing the San to listen to his preaching, as well as to take up residence at the missions, with tobacco and other gifts. Though he does not seem to have grappled with the religious implications of bribery for long, commenting that “If I could collect an hundred Bushesmen to hear the Gospel by holding out a piece of tobacco, I think it would be justifiable.”⁹⁰

The founding of Hephzibah was as much a strategic decision as it was motivated by Read’s concern for the salvation of the San ‘heathen’. In his report to the LMS concerning the establishment of the institution, he commented that he was in search of another site “about four days journey” from Hephzibah, where a mission to the numerous Korana in the area could be established – “and this would complete the chain to the Colony through this wild country, and very much facilitate travelling to the remote stations.”⁹¹

The new mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah, along with two smaller missions – out-posts of Griquatown – founded at Ramah and Konnah also in 1816, were intended to form a “chain” from the Colony to the northern mission field, including the mission at Griquatown and the proposed mission to the Tlhaping. Read believed that this would aid the missionaries in making the journey by providing useful rest and refreshment points along the Missionary Road into the interior. Combined with the ‘civilising’ effect that the missions were anticipated to have upon the surrounding San kraals, making them more peacefully disposed to sojourners traversing the territory, the prospects for mission activity in the interior appeared to be most promising. Read praised the positive effect this “chain” of mission stations had on making the route to the interior much safer for missionaries and travellers alike – “The road through the country of the wild Bushmen, so much dreaded by travellers, had become so safe, that a singly wagon had more than once passed from Griqua Town to the Colony without any molestation.”⁹² However, the longevity of this ambitious plan was not to last. Less than six months after the commencement of mission activity at Hephzibah, the missionaries were recalled to the Colony.

⁹⁰ Ibid. Missionaries Kramer and Scholtz at the Sak River mission had also used tobacco as a means to lure potential converts to the station. With “presents of tobacco” they travelled in the vicinity of the mission, inviting those who wanted to hear the Gospel to return with them to the station. See J.J. Kicherer “*The Rev. Mr. Kicherer’s Narrative of His Mission to the Hottentots*” p. 22.

⁹¹ Quoted in K. Schoeman “*The Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819*” p. 166.

⁹² J. Philip “*Researches in South Africa*” Vol. 2, p. 279.

While the personal animosity of the Governor, Lord Charles Somerset, towards the ‘meddling missionaries’, as well as the internal divisions within the LMS⁹³, have been forwarded as motivating factors for the government’s decision to put a halt to the mission work at Toornberg and Hephzibah⁹⁴, the steady encroachment of trekboers into the territory was of particular importance. The mounting hostility felt by the farmers towards the missionaries revolved around their need for labour. The farmers appear to have tolerated the presence of the missionaries ministering to those San considered to be “wild Bushman”, ‘Christianising’ and ‘civilising’ them, beyond the official boundary of the Colony.⁹⁵ The situation became tense when the missionaries were accused of harbouring San farm workers who had fled from their service in the Colony. It was largely in response to these claims that the government felt obliged to act. Landdrost Stockenström of Graaf-Reinet wrote to Erasmus Smit at Toornberg in October 1817, stating that “Continual complaints are sent in respecting persons who have run away from their masters being kept at your institution... It is impossible that I can endure it any longer to see that my authority as well as that of the governor are trodden under foot.”⁹⁶

The perceptions prevalent among the Khoikhoi of the south-western Cape that positioned the mission stations as places of safety from the daily deprivations suffered by many farm workers throughout the Cape were of comparable influence among San labourers in the Graaf-Reinet district. That “tame Bushmen” were fleeing the farms to take up residence at the mission institutions went against the colonial motivation for allowing missions to the San. Indeed, in keeping with what has been demonstrated thus far, Christian mission activity among the San began almost simultaneously with colonial efforts to ameliorate relations between them and the trekboers. Although the ongoing incidents of conflict along the northern frontier had spurred on the government to act towards pacifying the San during the late 18th century, the pressing issue of the availability of labour was at

⁹³ The missionaries at Toornberg and Hephzibah were recalled in the same year (1817) as the controversial LMS ‘Synod’, which was convened by the most vociferous of Read’s critics.

⁹⁴ For examples of this argument see K. Schoeman “Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Stadies Toornberg en Hephzibah, 1814-1818” *South African Historical Journal*, 29, 1993 & K. Schoeman “*The Early Mission in South Africa, 1799-1819*” p. 167.

⁹⁵ M. Szalay “*The San and the Colonisation of the Cape*” p. 55.

⁹⁶ Quoted in W.M. Macmillan “*The Cape Colour Question*” p. 130. Although the missionaries at Toornberg and Hephzibah had been recalled by the government in January 1817, Erasmus Smit appears to have remained at Toornberg until at least March of 1818, at which time he received a final order to abandon the station. Following the abandonment of Toornberg, Smit remained in the Colony until the time of the Great Trek, when he travelled with the Voortrekkers into the interior. He settled in Pietermaritzburg where he became the first minister of the Church of the Vow. R.L. Cope (ed.) “*The Journals of the Rev. T.L. Hodgson*” p. 65.

the forefront of the British government's agenda following the re-occupation of the Cape in 1806.⁹⁷ This issue was compounded among the outlying farming communities that relied heavily upon indigenous labour.

For many a colonist, the missions were expected to 'create' individuals with demeanours conducive to manual labour in agriculture and pastoralism. As mentioned, the criticism that Bethelsdorp came in for in the Commission of Circuit's report of 1813 highlighted what the Commissioners regarded as the problem of indolence demonstrated by the mission residents. This perception of the mission stations as refuges of lazy workers wanting to escape the labour for which they were required was characteristic of the relations between the missionaries and the settlers since the re-establishment of Genadendal in 1792. It was a key determinant of the ill feelings that the farmers felt towards the missionaries. In addition, the mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah stood in the way of the trekboers' northward progression. Not only were the institutions located at prized water points along the path to the Middle Orange River, but the presence of the missionaries constrained the means the colonists could have employed to secure access to the fountains. This would have taken the course of a rather straightforward process of dispossession had the missionaries not been present. Not long after the missionaries had been withdrawn, this did indeed transpire.⁹⁸

Soon after the removal of the missionaries, the sites on which the mission stations stood were occupied by northward bound trekboers. On her way to Bethelsdorp in September of 1818, through the region where the mission stations had been located, Ann Hamilton, wife of Robert Hamilton, missionary at Lattakoo (Dithakong), recorded the following remarks:

We rode by the places that had been stations but now left desolate. At poor Hephzibah we found a few who sang and prayed notwithstanding they have no missionary say they are determined to pray that the Lord again send His word among them; it made my heart bleed to see this place 2 years ago as I passed there were but 300 Bushesmen living there

⁹⁷ See the discussion by S. Trapido "The Emergence of Liberalism and the Making of Hottentot Nationalism" In University of London, Institute of Commonwealth Studies, *Societies in Southern Africa in the 19th and 20th Centuries: Collected Seminar Papers*, Vol. 18, 1992.

⁹⁸ The Cape government's consent in allowing the farmers to move onto the lands where the mission stations had been located was confirmed by the subsequent survey of the land undertaken by Captain Bonamy. Shortly after the recall of the missionaries he measured out the land to the farmers. J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 277.

*and the word of God in the midst of them, the land was covered with flocks and gardens, now not the smallest vestige of house or garden remains, all is destroyed by a Boor.*⁹⁹

Her final words in this illustration fall within a wider theme found in Mrs. Hamilton's descriptions of the region. Included are a number of criticisms of the trekboers and the disruptive consequences of their encroachment into the territory. For example, she remarked that a "Boor" had driven away most of the "Bushesmen" from the site that had been the former mission at Hephzibah. In light of her reference to the land at the station having been "covered with gardens" two years earlier, it is apparent that the settlement must have been founded near a reliable source of water. This would certainly have been a temptation that any northward bound trekboer would have found difficult to resist. In what was generally a dry region of the north-eastern interior, water sources were to prove key points around which negotiations of power over the land, and the consolidation of that power, would have played out. In addition, at the time of Read's sojourn at Toornberg in 1816, he noted that there was "fine water" at the site, sufficient for the cultivation of the ground.¹⁰⁰

The success achieved by these short-lived missions to the San becomes all the more remarkable when accounts of the sites several years after the recall of the missionaries are considered. Not only did the missionaries – among whom the 'native teachers' deserve much credit – appear to have successfully introduced some of the basic premises of Christianity among the mission residents¹⁰¹, but the 'civilising' effect of their work also 'bore fruit' and continued to do so for years after.

In 1822, some five years after the missionaries were required to abandon these stations, the Rev. Abraham Faure, minister at Graaff-Reinet, visited the former mission at Toornberg. He remarked on having seen a "beautiful garden" and "an excellent vineyard."¹⁰² It is noteworthy that these had been maintained so many years after the recall of the missionaries. Their sight inspired the Rev. to assert "that the conversion of this race of immortal beings is not impossible."¹⁰³ Evidently, a remnant community of San who had taken up residence at these missions during the time of the missionaries' tenures had chosen to remain attached to the sites. This speaks very clearly of significant cultural

⁹⁹ A. Hamilton, 24 September 1818, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 94.

¹⁰⁰ J. Read, 17 September 1816, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 78.

¹⁰¹ Rev. Faure commented that "Some of the Bushmen, whom Mr. Smit baptised, had acquired very rational ideas of the principles of the Christian religion." See J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 27.

¹⁰² Quoted in J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 27. Ann Hamilton's description of Hephzibah in 1818, some four years earlier, confirmed that the fountain at Hephzibah had been occupied by a "Boor". Thus, it is surprising that Toornberg, which is further south than Hephzibah, had not been procured by a farmer.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

adaptation in response to the changing colonial context. By remaining tied to these sites long after the mission work had ceased demonstrates that certain elements of the San population were altering, though not altogether abandoning, their hunter-gathering, nomadic lifestyle.¹⁰⁴ That those who did so were forced into the making the choice is without doubt.

In a letter to John Philip written after the abandonment of Hephzibah, the missionary assistant, Corner, lamented that the occasion brought about “much grief to the Bushmen.”¹⁰⁵ Corner informed Philip that the mission residents had “continued on the spot waiting for a missionary” and for “the first two or three years after the institution was put down they continued to make gardens.” This account does however, contradict that of Ann Hamilton. As mentioned, she observed that a “Boor” had occupied the mission house only months after the withdrawal of the missionaries. Thus, it is unlikely that the former mission residents would have continued to live at the site for two to three years after, as Corner had suggested.

Faced with increasing pressure on the land and resources upon which they depended for survival, the San, as the Cape Khoikhoi and Namaqua had done before them, turned to the missions for protection and a sense of security in response to the colonial onslaught. By 1825, at which time Philip visited Toornberg, the region, which had been beyond the Colony in 1817, when the missionaries were recalled, was “peopled with farmers to the Great River, several days journey beyond it!”¹⁰⁶ Philip observed that the mission house had since been occupied by a farmer and the resident San who had been living at the site at the time of Rev. Faure’s visit three years earlier had moved on.

Yet again, the LMS had failed the San. However, in contrast to the Sak River mission, it is quite clear that Toornberg and Hephzibah had proven far more successful in drawing San into their spheres of influence and in inculcating some of the basic tenets of the mission project, including the cultivation of the land. The same can be said for the two smaller San missions established as out-

¹⁰⁴ See the discussion on Philippolis below. When the Rev. T.L. Hodgson visited Philippolis in November 1822, he recorded in his journal that a large number of the mission’s residents were absent as they were foraging for the eggs of ants. This indicates that mission dwellers still engaged in gathering, and presumably hunting. R.L. Cope (ed.) “*The Journals of the Rev. T.L. Hodgson: Missionary to the Seleka-Rolong and the Griquas, 1821-1831*” p. 68.

¹⁰⁵ J. Philip “*Researches in South Africa*” Vol. 2, p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid* p. 29.

posts of Griquatown at Ramah, some three kilometers north of the Orange River, and Konnah, located on the river's south bank in 1816.¹⁰⁷

As with Toornberg and Hephzibah, these missions were also coordinated by so-called 'native agents'. Piet Sabba, stationed at Ramah, was a Griqua. He undertook to establish the mission in response to a request from a San kraal situated along the banks of the Middle Orange River for such to occur.¹⁰⁸ Again, this clearly indicates that an awareness of the protection that could be afforded to them by the presence of a missionary did exist among certain elements of the dispersed San population. Ministering at Konnah were two "converted Hottentots" from Lattakoo, named as Kruisman and David by John Campbell, who visited both missions in 1820. In his diary, Campbell recounted his impressions of these missions. His description of Ramah noted that there were approximately forty to fifty San residents, along with thirty Griquas, confirming that the mission community was 'mixed-race'. He also made mention of the houses that had been built at the site, in a neat row and after the European fashion. Campbell estimated that the church could hold one hundred worshippers.¹⁰⁹ He concluded "that if the Bushmen had a distinct mission to themselves it would put an end to all these robberies and miseries."¹¹⁰ Campbell was of course not the first to express such sentiments.

While a number of important points can be drawn from the mission activities of the LMS undertaken at Toornberg and Hephzibah, as well as at the smaller stations Ramah and Konnah, two points in particular require qualification. Firstly, the recall of the missionaries from Toornberg and Hephzibah came as quite a blow to the LMS at the Cape; the amount of attention Philip granted the matter in his "*Researches in South Africa*", written some ten years after the occurrence, is indicative of just how serious the Society regarded the issue. The extent to which the Government's actions with regards to the closure of Toornberg and Hephzibah influenced Philip several years later in his efforts to champion the defence of the Griquas is unclear.

¹⁰⁷ See K. Schoeman "Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Stadies Ramah, Konnah en Philippolis, 1816-1828" *South African Historical Journal*, 29, p. 136 & Szalay "*The San and the Colonisation of the Cape, 1770-1879*" p. 45. See Appendix B.

¹⁰⁸ H. Helm, 2 September 1822, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 111.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in K. Schoeman "Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Stadies Ramah, Konnah en Philippolis, 1816-1828" *South African Historical Journal*, 29, p. 135.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid* p. 136.

Nonetheless, the incident was an unambiguous indication that the LMS would have to re-orientate the focus and implementation of its *modus operandi* at the Cape. The Society's efforts to 'Christianise' the indigenous population within and beyond the Colony had to become more closely aligned with the Government and settlers' demands for labour. That Philip and Campbell appreciated this is apparent in their recommendations to the Directors of the Society in 1820. Indeed, this new dynamic was already evident in the efforts of the missionaries to save the San missions and to persuade the Government to reconsider its position. Following the initial order to abandon the missions in March 1817, Erasmus Smit at Toornberg put up a concerted effort to change the Government's decision. In doing so, he made a number of proposals that he thought would be accepted by the authorities as helpful compromises.

Included in these proposals to Landdrost Stockenström, made in February 1818, was the repositioning of the missions to within the border of the Colony, where he suggested that the Government could then "have the power to fix the number of inhabitants."¹¹¹ In addition, not "a single Bushman or Hottentot" would be accepted and allowed to settle at the mission without a "passport" showing that he/she had permission from the Landdrost to do so. Smit also proposed that if any "runaway Bushmen" sought residence at the mission, he would send a message to the Colony "that they may be restored to their masters again." His requests were rejected by the Landdrost and on the 17th of March 1818 the final order for the abandonment of the station gave Smit little alternative but to return to the Colony.¹¹² This whole affair highlights the increasing political involvement of the LMS at the Cape during this time; in particular, it demonstrates the growing concern LMS missionaries exhibited for meeting the Government's expectations.

Secondly, the 'mixed-race' composition of the mission settlements at these mission stations, as with the Sak River mission, again reveals the misconceptions espoused by several authors on the topic. While these institutions are repeatedly referred to as San missions by the likes of Schoeman and Szalay, and while that may have been the intention of the missionaries, it is nonetheless, problematic to refer to them as San mission stations. A vibrant, mixed-race community, made up of San, Khoikhoi and Korana, took up residence at the mission stations.

¹¹¹ Quoted in J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 281.

¹¹² J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 2, p. 283.

Therefore, the closure of these missions cannot be represented as having been due to a failed receptivity on the part the San to the combined 'Christianising' and 'civilising' efforts of the LMS, owing to their so-called primitive and static cultural framework. It has been clearly demonstrated that the failures of the missions that constituted this middle phase of mission work among the San had very little to do with the mission residents. In contrast, the extent of cultural adaptation exhibited by the mission dwellers, who gave "every kind of assistance in tilling the ground, herding the cattle, and shewed the greatest readiness to lay aside their savage life", clearly demonstrates receptiveness to the efforts of the missionaries.¹¹³

¹¹³ Ibid p. 279.

4) Pursuing the 'Ways of Peace': Griqua Consolidation & San Abandonment, 1820-1833.

*"He shall be a wild man; his hand shall be against every man,
and every man's hand against him."*

Genesis 16:12

As with the abandonment of the San mission at the Sak River, it was some time before a renewed effort to minister to the San was undertaken by the LMS following the closure of Toornberg and Hephzibah in 1817. After a period of some five years, a new attempt was made at Philippolis in 1822, named by the new superintendent of the LMS at the Cape from 1820 onwards, John Philip. Situated to the north of the Middle Orange River, the mission station exhibited many of the traits that had characterised the earlier missions to the San.

However, the greatest threat to the station's proper and continued functioning did not stem from the trekboers, although this did in time have its influence, but from the growing influence and power of the Griqua captaincies in the region. Remarkably, much of this new influence and power stemmed from the efforts of the LMS, and Philip in particular, to consolidate the Griqua captaincies into legitimate political entities in the eyes of the colonial administration at Cape Town. The increasing numbers of Griquas that settled around Philippolis from 1826 onwards created challenges for the resident missionaries who were concerned about the fate of the San. In response to this unfavourable state of affairs, a final attempt to establish a mission to the San was embarked upon by the missionary assistant James Clarke. At Bushman Station, situated to the east of Philippolis, near the banks of the Caledon River, Clarke resided over the last LMS effort to administer a mission station for the San.

The reasons for the failures of this third and final phase of LMS activity among the San along the Cape's north-eastern frontier must again be sought within the wider colonial context. The northward advance of the trekboers had, by the mid-1820s, exerted itself upon those tracts of land that had formerly remained outside the official boundaries of the Colony. The Sak River region was now occupied by farmers for much of the year and the extent of migration northwards along the Seekoei River to the Orange River could not be stayed. In step with this steady northward progression of the Colony, the LMS also undertook to re-establish itself along the Middle Orange River and beyond it

following the appointment of John Philip as superintendent in 1820.¹ The missions at Griquatown and Lattakoo assumed a position of much importance in this endeavour. While efforts were made to provide missions for the San, the significance the Society granted to the growing Griqua presence along the Middle Orange River, combined with the prospects that lay among the Sotho-Tswana further north, curtailed any potential success and longevity the San mission project may have achieved.

4.1) 'Driven to Subsist on Plunder': The Philanthropy of Rev. John Philip

The Rev. John Philip regarded the plight of the San during the preceding century as the *raison d'être* for the violence that had pervaded the northern frontier during the late 18th century and which had continued to manifest itself at various points along the advancing frontier during the early 19th century.² Referring to the condition of the Colony at the time of the first British occupation, he commented that "It was surrounded on the north and east by tribes of savages, driven to subsist on plunder by the predatory excursions of the boors, or exasperated to the highest pitch of ferocity by their repeated attacks and massacres."³ Drawing extensively on the observations of John Barrow in order to recount the state of race relations at the Cape during the late 18th century for his "*Researches in South Africa*", Philip appears to have inherited Barrow's sense of disdain for the farmers in the outlying districts of the Colony.

In light of his unflattering opinions of James Read, it is surprising that Philip pursued a request made by Read in 1821 that allegations of injustice and maltreatment meted out by the authorities in Uitenhage against inhabitants at Bethelsdorp be investigated.⁴ As discussed, it was accusations such as these that had culminated in the 'Black Circuit' of 1812 and had brought about numerous problems for the Society in the Colony thereafter. Hence, it is remarkable that Philip afforded Read the benefit of the doubt and made an appeal to Sir Rufane Donkin, the acting Governor, concerning these allegations of misconduct in the Uitenhage district. Furthermore, one of the key accused by Read was the Landdrost of Uitenhage, Col. Cuyler, along with several *veldcornets*. Governor Donkin

¹ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 19, No. 1, Upon the Administration of the Government at the Cape of Good Hope, The Right Honourable Earl Bathurst, Cape Town, 6 September 1826, p. 23.

² Upon his return to the Cape Colony in 1821, Lord Charles Somerset expressed his concern with regards to the safety of the frontiers. CA GH 23/7/1, 13 December 1821.

³ J. Philip "*Researches in South Africa*" Vol. 1, p. 59.

⁴ See H.A. Gailey "John Philip's Role in Hottentot Emancipation" In *Journal of African History*, 3, 1962, p. 423.

held that he could not ignore the charges and he proceeded to enact a series of public hearings in Uitenhage in May 1821 in order to investigate their validity. Much to the dismay of Philip and his efforts to re-establish congenial relations with the Cape authorities, the accusations were found to be without substance and dismissed. Donkin appears to have been particularly upset about the whole affair. He regarded Philip and Read's actions as "a deliberate attempt to ruin private characters and individuals by false and unavowed as well as unauthenticated charges." The Governor also expressed his anger at having been used as "the blind instrument of evil" in the missionaries' cause.⁵ From this point onwards, Philip's initial good relations with the Cape government steadily deteriorated. Yet again, the interactions between the government and the LMS came to revolve around the question of 'native policy'.

The parallels between this debacle and the Commission of Circuit of 1812 are striking. While Philip may have been inspired by the arrival of the 1820 settlers and the liberalising influence which accompanied them, his decision to pursue this course of action resulted in a re-affirmation of the LMS' precariousness in the Colony. Settler contempt remained. Those farmers that may have excused the LMS for its role in initiating the Circuit Courts by 1821 were again reminded of the Society's political instigation and the potential dilemmas it could create for individual farmers and whole communities alike. For Philip, his primary concern was to continue to reform the Society and its institutions.

Nonetheless, it is clear that he found it necessary to adopt a more conciliatory approach with the government. The closure of the mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah would certainly have been at the forefront of his mind. The amount of attention Philip granted to the closing of these mission stations in his "*Researches in South Africa*" is testament to the extent that the debacle alarmed him.⁶ He could not risk the government recalling more missionaries and closing more stations. Although the ban on missionaries ministering beyond the Colony's borders issued in 1816 had been relaxed following Philip's arrival at the Cape, the unpopularity of the Society due to the Uitenhage affair posed a new challenge. The return of Lord Charles Somerset in his second term as Governor in November 1821 compounded this challenge. After all, it was Lord Somerset who had issued the order to recall the missionaries from Toornberg and Hephzibah. Somerset was far less well-disposed towards the LMS and Philip than Donkin had initially been. Several of the comments

⁵ CA CO 4447.

⁶ See J. Philip "*Researches in South Africa*" p.x. 23-54.

Somerset made pertaining to the character of Philip in his private correspondence with Earl Bathurst reveal the extent of dislike he harboured for the man. For example, he referred to Philip's growing influence in the Colony as "hostile", asserting that he "mingled" in political affairs in order to generate political influence for himself.⁷

Although he did not abandon his struggle for justice for the Khoisan, Philip realised that his justification for doing so would have to focus on an issue that would carry weight with the colonial authorities. His discourse in defence of the indigenous populous came to revolve around the pressing issue of labour. In response to the challenge facing him and the Society during the early 1820s, Philip adopted a language that placed increasing emphasis upon the positive role that the missionaries and mission stations alike could play in inculcating an appreciation for labour among the indigenous populous. This is reflected in a variety of comments he made in correspondence with the Cape authorities, as well as in his *Researches*.⁸ In addition, Philip was also able to take full advantage of his contacts with prominent figures in Britain, finding a sympathetic ear among the likes of William Wilberforce and Thomas Buxton.⁹ His personal lobby went beyond the colonial government to the House of Commons itself. In his public defences of the LMS and its mission work at the Cape, he persistently evoked the free labour narrative: "At the missionary stations the Hottentots are treated like rational beings, and there they are taught the value of their labour"¹⁰ and "by raising all of the Hottentots of the Colony to the condition of Hottentots at Bethelsdorp, a new and extensive market would be created for British goods."¹¹

Philip asserted that "man is naturally indolent", therefore the Khoisan merely required the requisite instruction to gain an appreciation for the benefits of labour.¹² As a "product" of both the Scottish Enlightenment and the Scottish Evangelical revival, he believed that those who were less advanced owed their state of existence to their environment and that if provided with the means to improve,

⁷ CA GH 23/7/118A, 11 October 1824. Yet, when the LMS made a stir about the Government not legitimating the Society's possession of land surrounding the missions at Bethelsdorp and Theopolis in 1825, Somerset consented to their demands and handed over the land, including an additional 3 000 acres at Theopolis. Evidently, Philip's influence, and that of a rejuvenated LMS, had by this time grown to the extent where even Lord Somerset could not easily refuse the Society's demands. CA GH 1/48/669, 4 July 1825 & CA GH 23/7/248, 10 December 1825.

⁸ See A. Bank "The Great Debate and the Origins of South African Historiography" In *Journal of African History*, 38, 1997, p.x. 262-263.

⁹ J. Boas & M. Weiskopf "The Activities of the London Missionary Society in South Africa, 1806-1836: An Assessment" In *African Studies Review*, 16, 1973, p. 421.

¹⁰ J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" p. 141.

¹¹ Ibid. p. 365.

¹² Ibid. p. 362.

they were capable of adopting European standards of civilisation.¹³ He was clearly towing a colonial line intended to reconcile the government to the work of the Society and its missionaries. By appealing to “contemporary sentiments”, Philip sought to reposition the LMS as a missionary society that would serve the interests of the indigenous populous in such a way that in turn, the labour interests of the Colony would also be served.¹⁴

The mission stations would no longer be tolerated as places of indolence. The recommendations made by Philip and Campbell to the Directors of the LMS, mentioned above, reiterated this position. It is worth noting, however, that their proposals were made in May 1820, a year prior to the Uitenhage affair in May 1821. Thus indicating that both Philip and Campbell should be associated with the Eurocentric school of thought that was solidifying itself within the Society at the Cape and which was epitomised by the likes of Moffat and Thom. While the conversion of the Khoisan and other indigenous groups remained an objective of primary importance, the means to this end were to be colonially acceptable. The syncretistic approach used to good effect by the likes of Van der Kemp and Read was looked upon with disdain. Converted mission residents that lay about at the mission stations would not be tolerated. Good converts also had to be good labourers.

In addition, the state of the mission field in the interior required urgent attention. While efforts continued apace at Griquatown and Lattakoo, missions to the San had largely ceased following the recall of the missionaries in 1817. Owing to the challenges facing the Society within the Colony, the mission out-posts that had survived the 1817 order at Ramah and Konnah, lacked the necessary financial support to survive. Both stations suffered as the Society grappled with pecuniary difficulties and its political role within the Colony. It also appears that a fair degree of confusion existed around the state and fate of these two mission stations. For example, missionary Helm at Griquatown noted in September 1822, “I see in the report of 1821 that Piet Sabba and Kruisman’s places are under the inspection of the mission of G. Town. This must be a mistake for nobody in the world has given me any charge of them.”¹⁵

Nonetheless, it is unlikely that these mission stations were continuing to draw San into their spheres of influence. In keeping with the trend demonstrated thus far, Ramah and Konnah also attracted

¹³ S. Trapido “*The Emergence of Liberalism and the Making of Hottentot Nationalism*” p. 40.

¹⁴ J. Boas & M. Weiskopf “The Activities of the London Missionary Society in South Africa, 1806-1836: An Assessment” In *African Studies Review*, 16, 1973, p. 425.

¹⁵ A. Helm, 2 September 1822, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 111.

Griquas and Korana, in addition to San. Although Piet Sabba had been sent by William Anderson to instruct the “Bushmen” at Ramah, Helm commented that “when P. Sabba suffered so many of the Griquas to live him, who made themselves masters of the place, and in that way expelled the poor Bushmen, Mr. Anderson would have nothing to do with him.”¹⁶ Therefore, in all likelihood, the San mission project had once again succumbed to the combined influence of a variety of factors. None of which included the alleged failed receptivity of the San to the Gospel so frequently espoused in the existing literature.

That the mission project to the San had yet again come to naught was of much concern to both Philip and Campbell. The work that was still being undertaken at Ramah and Konnah was far from satisfactory. Philip himself commented on “the irregular proceedings of the native teachers who are supposed to reside at the stations called Ramah and Konna”, asserting that Piet Sabba of Ramah was “a disgrace to the missionary society.”¹⁷ Likewise, he expressed his discontent with Kruisman and David at Konnah who “occasionally go to Bethelsdorp and I am informed very frequently take with them disaffected Griquas without passes.”¹⁸

Again, these comments highlight the extent to which Philip was prepared to tow the colonial line in order to resurrect the reputation of the LMS at the Cape. While he was eager to improve the living and working conditions of the colonial Khoisan, Philip appreciated that this could only be achieved if the Society which he represented maintained a reputable standing in the Colony. A mission society accused of misdemeanours was less likely to garner support for its liberalising agenda than a society that worked within the boundaries set by the colonial administration. That Kruisman and David were alleged to have escorted Griquas into the Colony without passes was unacceptable. Their actions could have had serious repercussions for the Society should it have been discovered and publicised. Similarly, whatever Piet Sabba had done to warrant the assertion that he was a “disgrace” to the LMS did not bode well with the rejuvenation of the Society envisioned by Philip.

Rev. Campbell also became involved in the LMS’ effort to resume work among the San. In a request to Landdrost Stockenström in September 1820, Campbell noted that since the abandonment of Toornberg, four ‘Bastaard-Hottentots’ had been residing in the Sneeuweburg “in hopes that the mission

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ J. Philip, 26 March 1825, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 119.

¹⁸ Ibid.

there would be resumed.”¹⁹ It is not clear to whom he was referring, yet he was more than likely referring to four of the ‘native teachers’ who had worked and resided at the former mission. In light of the unlikelihood of the mission at Toornberg being recommenced – as the site had been settled by a trekboer – Campbell proposed that a new mission to the San be established in the territory between Griquatown and Lattakoo.

The motivation behind his request rested upon the volatile state of affairs that existed in this region at the time: “You will not be surprised at my feeling somewhat anxious that a station should be at that place, when it is considered that the communication between Griquatown and Lattakoo is at present very hazardous except to armed men – but were a station there only for a short time, the intercourse would be often and easy.”²⁰ Clearly Campbell believed in the effectiveness of a mission station in quelling whatever violence may have pervaded a particular area. That the proposed mission station was intended to assist in facilitating communication between Griquatown and Lattakoo is telling. Campbell’s proposal bears all the hallmarks of Read’s earlier justifications for the mission stations at Toornberg, Hephzibah, Ramah and Konnah to be established. For just as these missions were intended to induce calm in the region to the south of the Middle Orange River, allowing for safer travel into the interior, so too, Campbell’s proposed mission was anticipated to bring an end to the hostilities between the local communities and make mission work in the region less problematic.

In light of the population shifts underway at the time throughout much of the subcontinent beyond the borders of the Colony, widely regarded as having been caused by the Mfecane, it is unlikely that Campbell’s proposed mission could have had as dramatic an effect as he assumed.²¹ Even so, the proposal does point towards the growing importance of the northern mission field for the LMS. The prospects for missionary work to the north of the Orange River had acquired a sense of urgency following Campbell’s first tour of the Cape in 1813. This undertaking was, however, curtailed by the recall of the missionaries from Toornberg and Hephzibah in 1817, as well as by the government’s opposition to the establishment of mission stations beyond the Colony that was enforced by Lord Somerset during his first tenure as Governor at the Cape.

¹⁹ J. Campbell, 25 September 1820, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 103.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See C. Hamilton (ed.) *“The Mfecane Aftermath”* for a discussion on the debate surrounding the Mfecane.

Nonetheless, the LMS' agenda with regards to the northern mission field was given new impetus by the superintendency of Philip. He eagerly took up the cause of the Griquas in particular. Originally referred to as 'Bastaards' by the colonists, these mixed-race communities were encouraged to call themselves Griquas by John Campbell during his first tour of inspection of the Cape in 1813.²² The mission station at Klaarwater was renamed Griquatown and it became the site around which the increasing strength and influence of the Griquas occurred during the subsequent decade.

Due to the nature of the environment and the scarcity of water in the region, large numbers of people who called themselves 'Griquas' were also dispersed over a vast tract of country, stretching well beyond the immediate environs of Griquatown. As the subsequent experiences of numerous missionaries at various mission stations dotted throughout the Transorangia would confirm, the scarcity of water in the region made it impracticable to assemble together and settle a large contingent of people. This was attested to by Richard Miles in his report to the Directors of the LMS on the state of the Society's institutions at the Cape in October 1830. He commented on the nature of the environment and landscape in the Transorangia, and noted that while "the country abounds with springs, none of them yield a very abundant supply of water and therefore no considerable number of people can dwell together on one spot."²³

By the early 1820s, the number of Griquas living in and around Griquatown had risen to approximately 1 600. An estimated one thousand more were believed to be living in the vicinity of the mission station, along with nearly two thousand Korana.²⁴ Through their trade with the frontier trekboers, these communities had acquired hundreds of muskets and the potential threat that they could have posed to the advancing frontier was not lost on Philip or the Cape authorities alike. In September 1820, Stockenström commented in his report on the state of the Griquas following a tour of the region that "if these Griquas be not taken under the protection of the Government, every species of mischief may be dreaded from that quarter."²⁵ He proposed that a commissioner or agent be despatched to Griquatown to act as a representative of the Government and to facilitate whatever mediation may have been necessary between the Griquas and the colonial authorities.

²² See the discussion by R. Ross "Adam Kok's Griquas" p. 12 & G. Stow "The Native Races of South Africa" p. 362. The name 'Griqua' is believed to have stemmed from the name of a Khoikhoi tribe – 'Chariguriqua' – that used to live in the region of the Piquetberg of the south-western Cape in the early 18th century.

²³ R. Miles, 27 October 1830, CWMA, *Report to the Directors of the LMS*, Fiche 165.

²⁴ G. Thompson "Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa" p. 84.

²⁵ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 10, Captain Stockenström's Report, 13 September 1820, upon the State of the Griquas, and the Missionary Institution established among them, p. 425.

In addition, Philip – who demonstrated his disapproval of trekboer incursions beyond the colonial boundary in his contemporary writings owing to the disruptions these brought about among the indigenous populous – began to regard the political consolidation of the Griqua captaincies as a possible bulwark against the further encroachment of the colonists from the south.²⁶ Philip also argued that the divisions among the Griquas were of such a nature that the stability of the northern frontier was in serious jeopardy. The animosity between the colonially appointed captain, Andries Waterboer at Griquatown, and the hereditary captain, Adam Kok II, whose followers left Griquatown and survived by raiding and hunting in the Vaal and Riet Rivers region, was of particular concern to Philip.²⁷

These population shifts threw the Transorangia into a state of flux. Other groups dissatisfied with the election of Andries Waterboer also departed Griquatown. One such group became known as the Bergenaars, who together with Korana, achieved notoriety in the region owing to the violence that often accompanied their raiding. The volatility of the region presented a new, formidable challenge to the LMS and its prospects of maintaining a foothold in the region. This was made all the more apparent by the attack on Kuruman in 1828.²⁸ Philip had by this time already adopted the political recognition of the Griqua captaincies by the Cape government as a personal endeavour. He devoted much time and energy to this ambitious plan throughout the 1820s and 1830s. In one of many of his attempts to persuade the Cape government to support the Griquas and grant the captaincies official recognition, Philip avowed that “by assisting the Griqua chiefs and their adherents, the colonial government will... preserve the peace of the frontier and maintain a good understanding with all the Bechuana tribes beyond the Orange River...”²⁹ Indeed, Philip’s efforts to consolidate the Griqua captaincies into legitimate polities was not only motivated by his desire to stem the tide of trekboer encroachment from the south, but he also believed that the captaincies would act as a buffer zone between the Colony and the northern Sotho-Tswana chieftaincies.

For the San, the Griqua’s possession of fire-arms and their increasing supremacy along the Middle Orange River was by the early 1820s no longer a potential threat, but a very real one. The extent of hostility that existed between the San and the Griquas, as well as other groups such as the Korana and Bechuanas, in the region north of the Orange River was testified to by a number of contemporary

²⁶ K. Schoeman (ed.) *Griqua Records: The Philippolis Captaincy, 1825-1861* p. xiv.

²⁷ CA CO 4447

²⁸ See the discussion by R. Ross *Adam Kok’s Griquas* p. 20.

²⁹ J. Philip *Researches in South Africa* Vol. 2, p. 296.

observers.³⁰ For example, John Campbell noted during his stay at Lattakoo in April 1820 that several of the Society's cattle were alleged to have been stolen by "Bushmen". In response, the locals quickly arranged a commando to track the thieves down and return the Society's livestock. Campbell commented that "The hatred which many of them feel against Bushmen is so great that they are glad of such an occurrence, because it affords them an opportunity of taking revenge on that miserable portion of the human species."³¹

Likewise, Stockenström lamented that among the Griquas and "Bootchooanas" there existed "a horrible animosity towards the unfortunate Bosjesmen... which considers the murder of a Bosjesman, woman or child, meritorious under any circumstances."³² Among the residents at the Griqua mission station Campbell, to the east of Griquatown, there is also evidence of a deep sense of frustration with the continuing incidents of cattle theft; one witness commented that "they complain loudly of the Bushmen and have formed a commando to proceed against them."³³

Another observer, George Thompson, who toured the Cape interior in 1823, noted that the San "were a great annoyance" to the Griquas, "as well as other pastoral tribes".³⁴ He went on to compare the animosity harboured by the Griquas towards the San to that of the trekboers. At the time that Thompson visited Griquatown, the new captain, Andries Waterboer, who was said to be of San descent himself, was out leading a commando against a neighbouring San kraal.³⁵ In his astuteness, Thompson suggested that although the San were more often than not the aggressors, "have they not some cause to regard both Boors and Griquas as intruders upon their ancient territories?"³⁶

Indeed, it has been argued in this discussion that the debilitating effects of the advancing frontier upon the San communities of the north-eastern interior should not only be associated with the northward progression of the trekboers from the south. It must be recognised that the emergence of the Griquas along the Middle Orange River during the early 19th century resulted in a new frontier for the San; one that placed increasing pressure upon the means of their subsistence from the north.

³⁰ The San also had a history of violent encounters with the Namaqua to the west of Bushmanland. See D. Moodie "The Record" Collins' Report on the Bosjesmen, p. 34.

³¹ J. Campbell "Travels in South Africa, Narrative of a Second Journey" Vol. 1, p. 87.

³² British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 10, Captain Stockenström's Report, 13 September 1820, upon the State of the Griquas, and the Missionary Institution established among them, p. 425.

³³ R.L. Cope (ed.) "The Journals of the Rev. T.L. Hodgson" p. 221.

³⁴ G. Thompson "Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa" p. 80.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 85.

³⁶ Ibid.

Unlike the frontier to the south, the competition for land and resources that characterised this frontier occurred between population groups indigenous to the country. Though marked by numerous instances of conflict, with the San reported to have been “living in perpetual apprehension of attack from their more civilised neighbours [the Griqua]”, examples of San employment by the Griqua also occurred.³⁷ San women assisted “in watching the corn fields”, while the men were “employed as herdsmen.”³⁸ Being in the employ of the Griquas signalled a common characteristic of the phenomenon of the closing frontier that had exhibited itself to a great extent in southern, San-settler frontier zone.

By the mid-1820s, it is clear that the ascendancy achieved by the Griqua polities along the Middle Orange River marked a closing of this northern frontier for the San. With the steady stream of farmers into the region from the south, the north-eastern Cape interior – where retreating San kraals had been able to maintain a degree of independence – was a frontier zone that was closing fast. Squeezed between two groups superior in numbers and ammunition, this outcome was inevitable.

Trekboer incursions into ‘Bushmanland’ continued apace well into the 1820s. Although the colonial authorities had made various attempts to abate the flow of trekboers beyond the official borders of the Colony, whenever poor rains fell in the Roggeveld or Nieuweveld, the farmers had few alternatives open to them but to enter into the region framed by the Sak River in the west, the Seekoei River in the east, and the Orange River in the north.³⁹ The colonial authorities appear to have accepted this and they sought to accommodate the need the farmers had for crossing the boundaries in response to drought in particular. On 25 November 1825, Landdrost Andries Stockenström issued an order that laid out regulations for the traversing of the colonial border rather than banning trekboer encroachment altogether, which had proven unfeasible to date. While farmers were permitted to cross the border should it be deemed necessary and approved by a *veldcornet*, included in the order was an instruction that no trekboer was allowed to build any permanent abode

³⁷ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20. No. 9, Evidence of Mr. Moffat, a Missionary resident with the Bechuana Tribes at Lattakoo, 20 April 1824, p. 420.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 421.

³⁹ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20. No. 11, Evidence of Mr. George Thompson upon the State of the Bosjesmen, Griquas and other Frontier Tribes, 6 September 1824, p. 431. In a memorial to Governor Cole in 1829, several of the inhabitants and *veldcornets* of Graaf-Reinet noted that “on account of the drought” many were obliged to migrate across the colonial border in search of better pasture. CA CO 3945/1011, 15 September 1829. Inhabitants in the Sneeuwberg and Camdeboo also felt obliged to migrate into the interior in order to save their cattle owing to “great droughts”. CA CO 3944/827.

or cultivate any tract of land north of the border.⁴⁰ As soon as the rains returned to the Colony, the trekboers were required to return. Although the traversing of the Orange River was intended to be temporary and in order to accommodate seasonal fluctuations, in a short space of time, this developed into semi-permanent settlement in the Transorangia.

The territory into which these incursions occurred was the last viable area in which the Cape San had any hope of maintaining their independence and cultural integrity. Their prospects of retreating further inland in response to the growing numbers of colonists pressing northward well beyond the interior escarpment and the Roggeveld, Nieuweveld and Sneeuwberg, were thwarted by the presence of widespread Griqua communities stretching from Griquatown and the Orange River split along the Vaal, Riet and Modder Rivers. In the heart of the territory that lay between the Middle Orange River and these northern Rivers was founded a new mission station to the San in 1822.

4.2) The Founding of Philippolis, 1822-1828

Following the abandonment of the mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah, the circumstances upon which the effective functioning of the Griquatown out-stations at Ramah and Konnah depended became more and more problematic. The state of flux which the LMS found itself in during the subsequent three years undermined the Society's ability to grant these missions the financial and moral support they desperately needed. Left to their own devices, the stations soon deteriorated.

As mentioned, at the time of Campbell's visit to Ramah in August 1820, he observed "five European style houses" as well as San huts. He also reported that there were about forty residents living at the mission.⁴¹ Yet, when Thompson passed by the location in June 1823, all he found was the mission station deserted and the buildings in ruins.⁴² Moreover, the fall of Piet Sabba, the Griqua missionary stationed at Ramah, has already been mentioned. In June 1828 he was living among a group of Grikwas outside Philippolis. He was said to have been "living without even the form of religion" at the time, having no regard for his religious duties.⁴³ The work at Konnah undertaken by Kruisman and David fell foul of Philip when he took exception to some of the actions of these 'native teachers'. The motivation for Philip and Campbell's recommendation that the Society should

⁴⁰ K. Schoeman "Early White Travellers in the Transgariep, 1819-1840" p.x. 25-26.

⁴¹ J. Campbell "Travels in South Africa, Narrative of a Second Journey" Vol. 2, p. 301.

⁴² G. Thompson "Travels and Adventures in Southern Africa" Vol. 1, p. 61.

⁴³ R.L. Cope (ed.) "The Journals of the Rev. T.L. Hodgson" p. 390.

endeavour to send out more mechanics to the Cape mission field, mentioned above, stemmed in part from their joint dissatisfaction with the numbers and quality of 'native preachers' that had been raised up. In spite of the disappointments they may have felt with regards to the failures of Piet Sabba, Kruisman and David, when it came time to resume mission work among the San, it was one of the 'native teachers' of the class of 1814 that the LMS turned to: Jan Goeyman.

In November 1822, six months after the establishment of Philippolis, the Methodist missionary, Rev. Thomas L. Hodgson, rested at the institution on his way to establish a mission station to the Tswana further north. A number of observations he recorded in his journal offer valuable insight into the daily occurrences at the institution. On the night of his arrival on Sunday 17th November, he attended the evening worship service, with which he expressed his delight. He noted that the service "was conducted through an interpreter, the person addressing them speaking in Dutch and the interpreter in the Bushman language."⁴⁴ A prominent figure during the service was Jan Goeyman, the missionary assistant responsible for administering the institution.

With regards to Jan Goeyman, Hodgson portrayed him as "a good man"; in his manners "a modesty very prepossessing."⁴⁵ Since his time as a resident at Bethelsdorp, Goeyman had gained a reputation for having a praiseworthy character and an exemplary conduct.⁴⁶ Unfortunately for Goeyman, his initial success at Philippolis was not to last and a series of events that unfolded in 1825 culminated in his resignation from the LMS. The trouble started when Goeyman was accused of having engaged in nefarious activities with the wife of one of the mission residents, "having slept a whole night in the church."⁴⁷ The accusation was founded upon the testimony of a "Bushman". The eyewitness is never named in the records, but merely referred to as the "Bushman."

Even though the accusation was found to be baseless and dismissed, it appears that there were certain members of the mission community who wished to see Goeyman expelled from the institution. While the verdict was pending, Philip recommended that he "discontinue performing the duties" of his office, which Goeyman alleged brought much joy to his "enemies."⁴⁸ During his absence while

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 68.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 70.

⁴⁶ For example, J. Messer, 1 January 1818, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 89.

⁴⁷ *Minutes of Evidence*, Philippolis, 18 August 1825, CWMA, Fiche 125.

⁴⁸ J. Goeyman, 18 October 1825, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 125.

on a visit to Graaf-Reinet, his lodgings at Philippolis were “broken to pieces.” A malicious act indeed.

However, Goeyman had complained to both Philip and Stockenström in early 1825 that he was experiencing difficulties in asserting his authority over certain members of the mission community. It must be recognised that the community was mixed-race prior to the arrival of the Griquas under Adam Kok II, and Goeyman appears to have encountered setbacks in controlling certain Khoikhoi or ‘Bastaard’ inhabitants.⁴⁹ In the LMS Report of 1824, it is stated that Goeyman thought “a European missionary would succeed” where he had failed.⁵⁰ As a result, when John Philip undertook an extensive tour of the Cape interior in August 1825, accompanied by the missionary James Clarke, Philip decided to place the superintendence of the mission at Philippolis under his authority.⁵¹ The relations between Clarke and Goeyman were strained from the outset. It appears that Goeyman took exception to Philip’s appointment of Clarke as the head of the mission. The tension between the two boiled over in one incident when Goeyman allegedly broke the hinges of the door to Clarke’s lodgings in a moment of rage.⁵² Two weeks later Goeyman resigned from the LMS.

Goeyman’s closing comments in his letter of resignation to Rev. Faure in Cape Town indicate the extent of his distress as a result of what he must have regarded as an unfair state of affairs: “I have laboured at Philippolis three years both in spiritual and temporal things, and now everything is at once taken out of my hands. This is a heavy trial and I would rather not be there at all than under such circumstances. Believe me my dear sir I now leave the Society.” Thus came to an end the career of Jan Goeyman in the services of the LMS. His personal interaction with the Society extended all the way back to the first San mission at Sak River. He was also a prominent figure in the short-lived history of the San mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah. As far as his role in the San mission project was concerned however, this is where the road came to an end.

Returning to the observations made by Rev. Hodgson in November 1822, it is noteworthy that there were only about twenty “Bushmen” in attendance at the worship service on his first night, including children; not a significant number at all. However, Hodgson commented that the “usual number of

⁴⁹ K. Schoeman (ed.) “*The Griqua Mission at Philippolis, 1822-1837*” p. 13.

⁵⁰ Quoted in K. Schoeman “Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Stasies Ramah, Konnah en Philippolis, 1816-1828” In *South African Historical Journal*, 29, 1993, p. 143.

⁵¹ J. Philip “*Researches in South Africa*” Vol. 2, p. 90.

⁵² J. Clarke, 4 October 1825, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 125.

residents is about 60, the remainder having gone to a distance in search of what they term rice, the eggs of ants, which they procure as food from the large anthills.”⁵³ This observation is most telling as it points towards the altered function that this mission station had assumed. Rather than being a settlement solely dependent upon agriculture, approximately two-thirds of the mission residents still engaged in gathering food in the surrounding environs. That it was the evening service which was poorly attended suggests that those out gathering would have remained away for the night, maybe even several consecutive nights. The extent of cultural adaptation practiced by the San mission residents at Philippolis reveals much about the broader processes of cultural adjustment that must have been occurring in this region and at this time in response to colonial pressures and the debilitating effects of the closing frontier.

With their nomadic patterns of transhumance having been severely disrupted during the course of the preceding half-century, it appears that certain elements of the San communities adjusted by being willing to remain tied to one particular spot, without necessarily abandoning their traditional modes of subsistence. As the mission residents were continuing to gather food, it is reasonable to suggest that they were too still actively hunting.

Of particular interest to this discussion is also Hodgson’s description of the site upon which the mission station was located: “This institution... is in a most favourable position for the purpose, possessing a fountain which flows copiously and which can be conveyed with very little trouble over a great quantity of land, as well as the great advantage of several fountains in the neighbourhood where residents connected with the institution might be placed so as to form a circuit.”⁵⁴ It is evident from this description that the immediate environs of the mission station were well-watered and conducive to grazing cattle. The need for the mission station to achieve self-sufficiency demanded that the locations chosen had a reliable source of water.

While it is not clear to what extent the ‘native teachers’ attempted to inculcate the principles of sedentary agrarian life among the mission residents, which was so typical of the broader mission project undertaken by Europeans, the cultivation of the ground would nonetheless have been necessary. It was a prerequisite for any successful, long-term settlement at the time, certainly in the outlying districts of the Colony. However, by establishing the mission station at a site that had a

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 69.

reliable source of water in a terrain susceptible to drought, the mission community unwittingly became a prime target for trekboers and other pastoral groups, such as the Griquas. This was one of the many factors that sealed the fates of Toornberg and Hephzibah. In the case of Philippolis, not only did the site upon which the community was established possess a tempting fountain, but the surrounding area was also well-watered and according to contemporary observations, very much conducive to cattle grazing.

Departing from Philippolis at 6 o'clock in the morning on Tuesday 19th November, Hodgson's party travelled some four hours before resting alongside "a large body of water and where there is abundance of grass."⁵⁵ Travelling northwards, the party encountered a plain the following day, where there was an "abundance" of water and grass.⁵⁶ Indeed, throughout the journey through the region framed by the Orange River to the south and the Riet River to the north, Hodgson's touring group not once failed to find sufficient water and grazing for the cattle.⁵⁷

It seems likely that at the time of Hodgson's tarry at Philippolis, the region had experienced good rainfall, for when John Melvill, the government agent at Griquatown, visited the institution in April 1827, he commented that "this place is far from being suitable for a missionary station, on account of the weakness of the spring."⁵⁸ This description confirms that the region was then at it is today, susceptible to drought. As such, competition for whatever fairly reliable water sources that did exist, such as the spring at Philippolis, was going to be intense. Unlike with the mission stations at Toornberg and Hephzibah, the more northward location of Philippolis meant that such competition also stemmed from pastoral groups other than the trekboers. Their later arrival in the territory towards the late 1820s intensified an already active state of competition between the San, Korana and Griquas over access to water and the general resources of the land, attested to by the travellers' accounts of hostility that existed between these groups which have already been discussed.

Nonetheless, in keeping with processes demonstrated further south and at an earlier time, relations of animosity between the San, Griquas and Korana were also countered by instances of co-operation and social intermingling in the Transorangia. The extent of interracial mixing that was occurring

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 70.

⁵⁷ Prior to his arrival at Philippolis, Hodgson remarked that the territory to the north of Toornberg was "more capable of cultivation than that over which we have travelled for several days." Ibid. p. 65.

⁵⁸ J. Melvill, 8 June 1827, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 136.

within this region during this time was witnessed by Hodgson in an encounter on Thursday 21st November 1822. Arriving at a fountain around midday, his party met a number of people who informed him that they were from Griquatown. They had decided to leave the settlement “in consequence of the drought” in that part of the country and they proceeded to seek water and grass for their cattle. Hodgson observed four wagons at the site, along with “about 20 temporary huts.”⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that Hodgson referred to the “captain or king” of those residing at the fountain as a “Bushman”. He commented that “the captain is a pleasant, cheerful, well-made man but without much pomp of royalty, for he only had one shoe, a hat without any brim and no clothing except a kaross.” For Hodgson, there was little doubt that the people he encountered were “Bushmen”.

Although the group’s possession of cattle and wagons, which suggests engagement in some form of trading activity, appears to contradict the missionary’s assessment, being more apt of Korana or Griqua, Hodgson came into contact with a variety of people during his journey; in numerous instances he differentiated between “Bushmen”, presumably San, as well as Korana and Griqua and he did not seem to experience any difficulties in making the distinctions. Indeed, at the evening service, which was conducted at the site, he remarked that there were several “Bastaards” from Griquatown in attendance. Therefore, within one mixed-race group of frontier inhabitants, Hodgson distinguished between “Bushmen” and “Bastaards”, which owing to the latter’s connection to Griquatown, more than likely regarded themselves as Griquas.

While the appropriate scepticism must be conceded, allowing for errors in his first-hand descriptions – just as with the multitude of other contemporary observers – that he made distinctions at all is significant. It suggests that while interracial mixing was becoming more and more characteristic of the communities along the north-eastern frontier, resulting in the emergence of social amalgams such as the one described here by Hodgson, the accompanying cultural integration had not gone so far as to make the task of identifying different ethnic or racial sub-groups impossible. Therefore, the survey of the mission community at Philippolis undertaken by John Melvill in June 1827 is most surprising in terms of its results. With regards to the social composition of the population at the institution, Melvill estimated the following: “20 families of Griquas and about 50 of Bechuanas.”⁶⁰ The San, or ‘Bushmen’ as he would have termed them, are conspicuous in their absence.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 70.

⁶⁰ J. Melvill, 8 June 1827, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 136.

The necessity for settling Adam Kok II and his followers at Philippolis was made all the more apparent to Philip by an attack “by a party of Caffres” in May 1826 carried out on a out-post of the mission station. Thirty-one inhabitants were murdered, some “burned to death in their houses or assegaied in attempting to flee out of them”, with all the cattle stolen.⁶¹ This incident demonstrated that the mission community at Philippolis was vulnerable to such an attack and therefore, in need of protection. For Philip, allowing Adam Kok II’s Griquas to settle at the institution was the most practical plan. Taking on an increasingly instigative role in the population dynamics of the Transorangia frontier zone, Philip even attempted to persuade the raiding Bergenaars to acknowledge Adam Kok II as their leader.⁶²

The significance of this event as a catalyst for the subsequent consolidation of the Adam Kok II captaincy at Philippolis, is that it demonstrates that Philip’s scheme to establish the Griquas as a bulwark against settler advances from the south, was also motivated by the prospect of creating a convenient buffer zone between the likes of Mzilikazi’s amaNdebele north of the Vaal River and the Colony.⁶³ The original intentions behind the founding of the mission, namely to serve as a base for pacifying and ministering to the San, were superseded by the political clout that Philip could leverage out of defending the Griquas and their claim to the territory.

The decrease in the number of San residing at or around the mission station as a consequence was unwittingly recorded by John Melvill in 1827, roughly a year after the arrival of Adam Kok II and his followers at the institution, when he noted that “The whole population of the country subject to A. Kok amounts to about 60 Griquas and Old Inhabitants together, 150 Bechuanas, 30 Corrannas, and about 30 families of the plundered tribes called Basootoos, making the whole, men , women and children, about 1 150.”⁶⁴ It may be assumed that whatever San remained at the site, or in the general vicinity, were classified under the heading of “Old Inhabitants”. To amount to sixty along with the Griquas, compared to more than double the number of “Bechuanas”, indicates that a steady decline in their numbers at the mission and in the surrounding environs had occurred since the re-orientation

⁶¹ R. Miles, 16 January 1827, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 134.

⁶² The ongoing raids and population shifts in the Vaal-Caledon River region during the mid to late 1820s began in the early 1820s. The most significant event associated with the earlier period of these population upheavals in this region, and along its northern fringes, was the “Battle of Dithakong” in 1823. While there remains much debate surrounding the actual proceedings of the battle – fuelled by Julian Cobbing’s wider revision of the Mfecane – the assistance given to the defence of Dithakong by the Griquas would have left an indelible impression upon Philip. See C. Hamilton (ed.) “*The Mfecane Aftermath*” Ch. 15.

⁶³ See the discussion by K. Schoeman (ed.) “*The Griqua Mission at Philippolis, 1822-1837*” p. 22.

⁶⁴ J. Melvill, 8 June 1827, CWMA, *Incoming Letters*, Fiche 136.

of the institution into the seat of Adam Kok II's captaincy. This was also confirmed by Richard Miles in his report of 1830, when he commented that "in addition to the Griquas, a considerable number of refugee Bechuanas have resided under their protection, also a few Bushmen in the neighbourhood."⁶⁵ In addition to the increasing numbers of Bechuanas, Philippolis, as well as the other Griqua captaincies, became places of protection for refugee Tlhaping, Rolong and Hurutshe, all fleeing southwards in response to the population dynamics associated with the Mfecane.⁶⁶ By the early 1830s, it is estimated that the total number of these refugees seeking the protection that could be afforded to them by the Griqua captaincies stood at a significant twenty thousand.⁶⁷ Yet, by this time, the objectives of Philip's plan were already giving way to the pressures of continuing trekboer advances into the region dominated by the Vaal River system.

Philip knew full well that without the settlement of the Griquas, Philippolis would have succumbed to the pressures of the trekboer advances in a similar manner to that of Toornberg and Hephzibah a decade earlier. In a condescending letter to James Clarke, who continued to question the decision, Philip clearly stated his motivation for allowing the Griquas of Adam Kok II to settle at Philippolis: "It is amazing to me that you do not see even now what was clearly seen in 1825, that if the Griquas had not thus come into the country, the whole of that country and indeed both sides of the river as far as Griquatown would have been long ago in the hands of the Boors."⁶⁸

While the Cape government's recognition of the Griqua captaincies, including that of Adam Kok II at Philippolis, had stalled the northward progression of the trekboers for the time being, Philip's grandiose plan was not able to halt the advance for long. Indeed, already by January 1829, only some three years after Adam Kok II's arrival at Philippolis, a complaint was sent to Sir Lowry Cole, Governor of the Cape, concerning the numerous instances of trekboer incursions into the territory designated as the Philippolis Captaincy: "a great many colonial farmers have come over the boundaries into this country with their numerous herds and flocks", and "the colonists who have penetrated 70 miles beyond the boundaries are in the habit of hunting in these parts, and the game in consequence is likely to be destroyed or driven away, that the poor natives must eventually be

⁶⁵ R. Miles, 27 October 1830, CWMA, *Report to the Directors of the LMS*, Fiche 165.

⁶⁶ N. Etherington "The Great Treks" p. 201.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ J. Philip, 19 June 1833, In Pellissier "Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie" p. 189.

reduced to the greatest misery and want, and will in all probability resort to the practice of plundering as their only recourse...”⁶⁹

The parallels between this account concerning the experiences of the Griquas due to the advance of the colonial frontier – in particular, with regards to the prediction that they would be reduced to such a state that plunder for survival would have been inevitable – and the experiences of the San during the preceding half-century are striking. The socio-political outcomes engendered by the steady advance of the Colony for the Griquas, as well as those groups that had sought their protection, lie beyond the scope of this discussion, which now turns towards the last concerted effort undertaken by the LMS to establish a mission station for the San, illustrated by its name: Bushman Station.

4.3) ‘The Means of Grace on a Station of Their Own’: Bushman Station, 1828-1833

The final attempt by the LMS to administer a mission to the San was undertaken by the missionary James Clarke, with the assistance of George Kolbe, who established the mission at Bushman Station. Following the arrival of Adam Kok II’s Griquas at Philippolis in 1826, Clarke had found it increasingly difficult to carry on his duties among the San residents that had remained attached to the site. By the beginning of 1828, he had decided to withdraw from Philippolis and commence a new mission further south, near the Caledon River.⁷⁰ His decision was not unilateral, but it was approved by the LMS⁷¹, as well as by the colonial authorities. Indeed, much of the motivation behind the establishment of Bushman Station stemmed from the Cape government, in particular the Lieutenant-Governor of the Eastern Province, Sir Richard Bourke, who was reported to have been “anxious to found an institution for the Bushmen to the eastward of Philippolis near the Caledon River.”⁷²

In spite of the general state of flux that pervaded the Transorangia interior, compounded by the dual forces of trekboer incursions and the population upheavals associated with the consequences of the Mfecane, the San were not as yet forgotten. A prominent figure in the defence of the indigenous populous along the frontier, in particular the San, was Andries Stockenström, Landdrost of Graaf-

⁶⁹ Adam Kok II and Raad to Sir Lowry Cole, 23 January 1829, In Schoeman (ed.) *“Griqua Records: The Philippolis Captaincy, 1825-1861”* p.x. 19-20.

⁷⁰ See K. Schoeman “Die Londense Sendinggenootskap en die San: Die Stasie Boesmanskool en die Einde van die Sending, 1828-1833” In *South African Historical Journal*, 30, 1994.

⁷¹ Richard Miles was acting as superintendent of the LMS at the Cape at this time, owing to the temporary absence of John Philip, who had returned to Britain.

⁷² R. Miles, 7 June 1828, In S.H. Pellissier *“Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie”* p. 195.

Reinet. His reputation for having been well disposed towards the San was evidenced in a number of his public orders. Concerning mounting requests for the extension of the Colony's borders, Stockenström stated the following: "The encroachments on the aborigines began at Cape Town, and never ceased to extend by degrees until the colonists had got to where they now are... If the government had had sufficient knowledge of the interior and sufficient authority in it, when the first settlers came to the chain of the Sneeuw and Nuweld-bergen, and there had fixed the boundary... the Bosjesmen might have remained in peaceable possession of the country beyond..."⁷³

James Clarke took full advantage of the Landdrost's character and exerted himself in an effort to persuade Stockenström to allow him to establish a new mission to the San once the situation at Philippolis had become impracticable. Clarke failed to acknowledge any good in Philip's grandiose plan in granting occupancy of Philippolis to Adam Kok II. He expressed his frustrations to Stockenström in September 1827, arguing that the Griquas harboured much prejudice towards the San, "the original inhabitants of Philippolis."⁷⁴ Stockenström had expressed his support for missions among the San, declaring himself "a strong advocate" of the cause.⁷⁵ He also argued that the colonists should "be rigidly prevented from getting into that tract of country [north of the Orange River]", believing that the best opportunity open to the government to raise the condition of the San "by making them graziers" lay within the region where Philippolis was located.⁷⁶ Stockenström's enthusiasm for the mission work among the San at Philippolis was of course stifled by Philip's bolder, more ambitious plan.

Due to the history of animosity between the Griquas and the San, many San residents had abandoned Philippolis in the months following the arrival of Adam Kok II. While Kok demonstrated a predisposition towards the missionaries – no doubt grateful for his re-legitimated position of authority and a base from which to exert it – rather than the Griquas providing protection for the San, in keeping with Philip's agreement, relations between the two groups soon enough broke down. For example, in February 1827, a herdsman was murdered and several cattle stolen from Philippolis. This was recorded as the ninth instance in which such a crime had been committed since the arrival of Adam Kok II and his followers. The perpetrators were identified as "Bushmen" and a commando

⁷³ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 8, Papers relative to the Measures taken for fixing the Boundaries of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope upon the Eastern and Northern Frontiers, p. 411.

⁷⁴ J. Clarke, 10 September 1827, In Schoeman (ed.) "The Griqua Mission at Philippolis, 1822-1837" p. 34.

⁷⁵ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20, No. 8, Papers relative to the Measures taken for fixing the Boundaries of the Colony of the Cape of Good Hope upon the Eastern and Northern Frontiers, p. 412.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

was assembled and despatched in pursuit of them. The commando returned the following day with eight prisoners in tow. John Melvill recognised one of the culprits as having been a former resident at the mission station. In addition, one of the group was identified as being the “chief” and he noted, “it appears that the spring at Philippolis belongs to this Bushman Chief.”⁷⁷ Melvill’s tense in this statement is of course incorrect, for by this time, whatever claim to the spring the “Bushman Chief” may have had was no longer of any relevance to the new Griqua community residing at the site.

This state of affairs was most untenable for Clarke, who continued to lobby for government permission to re-establish a mission to the San in the region. To his delight, in December 1827, the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir Richard Bourke, requested that Clarke undertake a tour of the territory between the Orange and Caledon Rivers in order to ascertain whether or not there were any viable locations for the establishment of a San mission.⁷⁸ Accompanied by John Melvill, the two selected a favourable location and the mission at Bushman Station was commenced in May 1828.

The new mission station was “situated about 30 miles eastward of Philippolis, and but a short distance from the Colony on the north side of the main branch of the Orange River.”⁷⁹ Initially, the missionaries Clarke and Kolbe found no San living near the site. This changed in a short space of time and soon some forty “Bushmen” were taking up occupation at the mission, some assisting in the construction of shelters.⁸⁰ Clarke noted that several of the new residents had heard him teach at Philippolis and had travelled to Bushman Station upon hearing of its inception. In addition to the encouragement of the Cape government for the mission station to be established, the missionaries also received a gift of over forty sheep from “well disposed farmers”, living along the Orange River.⁸¹ Clarke regarded this as most beneficial to their efforts as they could ration out portions to the community and in that way provide for their needs, especially on Sundays, when much to the

⁷⁷ Quoted in K. Schoeman (ed.) “*The Griqua Mission at Philippolis, 1822-1837*” p. 41.

⁷⁸ J. Clarke and J. Melvill, 25 December 1827, In S.H. Pellissier “*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*” p. 170. See also the discussion by K. Schoeman (ed.) “*Early White Travellers in the Transgariep, 1819-1840*” p.x. 30-32.

⁷⁹ R. Miles, 27 October 1830, CWMA, *Report to the Directors of the LMS*, Fiche 165. The location of this mission station must not be confused with that of one of the Kat River settlements out-stations, situated near the source of the Wit Kei River. It too appears in the records as ‘Bushman Station’. Thus, some authors, in particular Szalay, have referred to Clarke’s Bushman Station as the Caledon River Institute in order to distinguish between the two. See M. Szalay “*The San and the Colonisation of the Cape, 1770-1879*” p. 46. Following the release of the LMS station under review to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society in 1833, the name of the institution was changed to Bethulie. The distance and direction of the modern day town of Bethulie from Philippolis coincides with the description given by Richard Miles in his report of October 1830, confirming that the San mission referred to as Bushman Station by Clarke and Philip was indeed the mission that became Bethulie.

⁸⁰ J. Clarke, 31 December 1828, In Pellissier “*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*” p. 173.

⁸¹ Ibid.

displeasure of the missionaries, the “Bushmen” were in the habit of going out to collect and hunt food. Such activities were not acceptable on the Lord’s Day.

Indeed, the initial outlook for the new mission at Bushman Station seemed promising. In his report to the LMS in 1830, Philip recorded that there were some fifty adults residing at the station. He also noted the residence of two “Colonial Bastards”.⁸² By all accounts the mission community was doing well. In their possession were thirty-four oxen, over a hundred sheep and goats and twenty-five milch cows. Most of the livestock was given to the mission by Adam Kok II as a present. The two “Colonial Bastards” owned twenty-one oxen, thirty milch cows and well over a hundred sheep and goats. In addition, “between three and four acres of land” were cultivated, with “eleven plots of ground planted for gardens.” Potatoes, beans, corn and tobacco were grown quite successfully, and in 1829, seven wagon loads of pumpkins were produced. It is worth noting that in spite of the yield provided by the cultivation of the land at the station, the San still gathered roots, locusts and the larvae of ants from the surrounding countryside “in large quantities.” Philip also mentioned that they still hunted for game.

The community’s reliance on both the produce harvested from the cultivation of the land and the sources of food hunted and gathered resembles the mode of subsistence employed by the mission residents at Philippolis in the early 1820s. Yet again, while a certain amount of adaptation in the San’s social organisation and cultural traits had occurred, their traditional hunting and gathering modes of survival had not been discarded entirely; in spite of the evidence that they were actively engaging in the cultivation of the land and that they had given up their nomadic wanderings, remaining tied to the mission station and its immediate environs.

Within three years, Clarke was pleased to announce that the total number of inhabitants at the institution had grown to about one hundred.⁸³ Among the residents were ten adults and twenty children that attended the school regularly where they were taught to read the New Testament, as well as hymns and catechism. Clarke’s greatest delight, however, stemmed from the peaceful state of affairs that existed in the territory surrounding the station. This was a far cry from the numerous incidents of violence that occurred in the region prior to the establishment of the mission station. The

⁸² J. Philip, *Report of the South African Mission Stations 1830*, In Pellissier “*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*” p.x. 179-180.

⁸³ J. Clarke, 23 April 1833, In Pellissier “*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*” p. 185.

motives for this violence were new in terms of their geographical location, but they were certainly not new in terms of the primary actors and processes. As Clarke stated in his correspondence with Philip:

*"Previous to our arrival in these parts there had been continued irritation and conflict between the colonists within the boundary and the poor Bushmen beyond it – the former losing his cattle and the latter his children and frequently his life... there is now peace between the Farmer and the Bushmen, and the voice of prayer and the sound of praise is to be heard from some of the latter on this Station. Very considerable provocation and temptation has been given this last year to the Bushmen (by some of the Farmers in this neighbourhood) to commence their old habits of plundering but they have uniformly resisted, and have steadily pursued the ways of peace."*⁸⁴

The conflict to which Clarke was referring stemmed from the increasing rate of incursions of the colonists into the Transorangia. Located a short distance from Philippolis, it is not surprising that the new mission station and its inhabitants had to face similar challenges due to trekboer competition for resources from the very beginning of its inception. Philip reiterated this in his report concerning the state of Bushman Station in 1830, when he stressed the need for the government to curtail the numerous instances of trekboer forays into the region north of the Orange River. Their hunting chased away the game upon which the San depended and the grazing of their cattle depastured the land.⁸⁵ This occurred "a great distance" up the Caledon, Riet and Modder Rivers.⁸⁶

As the only viable source of labour for the frontier farmers, the San were being placed under mounting pressure to enter into the service of the farmers.⁸⁷ The farmers appear to have preferred San children as opposed to adults. More easily acculturated to the requirements set by the farmers than adults accustomed to nomadic hunting and gathering, San children were widely regarded as useful labourers in the outlying districts of the Colony. Preying on the vulnerability of the San communities, the farmers engaged in bartering for children.⁸⁸ Described as "trafficking" by Philip,

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 184.

⁸⁵ J. Philip, *Report of the South African Mission Stations 1830*, In Pellissier "Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie" p. 181.

⁸⁶ CA CO 4447

⁸⁷ M. Szalay "The San and the Colonisation of the Cape, 1770-1879" p. 79.

⁸⁸ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20. No. 9, Evidence of Mr. Moffat, a Missionary resident with the Bechuana Tribes at Lattakoo, 20 April 1824, p. 421.

the practice of bartering for San children was banned by Lord Somerset in 1817.⁸⁹ In spite of attempts to enforce the ban, Moffat reported in 1824 that the practice was still prevalent, with the price offered having been raised “with a view to tempt them.”⁹⁰ When Commandos were employed to recover stolen livestock or mete out revenge in response to various depredations, San children were often spared their lives and forced into labour on the colonial farms.

The colonial frontier stretched well beyond the mission stations at Philippolis and Bushman Station, which lay within a part of the Transorangia that was being increasingly traversed by farmers seeking the waters and pastures offered by the northern rivers.⁹¹ Even the political recognition afforded to the Griqua captaincies could not stem the advance of the frontier, which by 1830 was closing rapidly around those pockets of territory that had become the last vestiges of independence for the San.

It is noteworthy that in Philip’s report of 1830 pertaining to his “observations connected with the Bushman Station”, he did not mention the actual mission station once. His report focused entirely on the debilitating effects that the trekboer incursions were having on the San communities in the vicinity of the settlement.⁹² The language contained in the report points towards the general concern Philip was continuing to harbour with regards to the steady northward advance of the Colony. Indeed, the extent of the trekboer encroachment around the mission at Bushman Station, only a short distance from Philippolis, called into question the effectiveness of his scheme to establish the Griqua captaincies into a bulwark against further trekboer advances. Evidently, four years of Griqua presence at Philippolis had not amounted to much in terms of halting the Colony’s northward momentum in the wider region.

For some residents, not even the mission station and the presence of the missionaries could protect them from the debilitating effects of the advancing frontier. This was the unfortunate reality for one mission inhabitant, named Flink, who in January 1830 was shot and killed by a farmer not far from the station.⁹³ The farmers believed that Flink was the guilty party in the theft of two of their oxen and exacted what they regarded as appropriate punishment. The execution was most distressing to Clarke

⁸⁹ J. Philip “*Researches in South Africa*” p.x. 276-277 & Szalay “*The San and the Colonisation of the Cape, 1770-1879*” p.x. 92-93.

⁹⁰ British Parliamentary Papers, Vol. 20. No. 9, Evidence of Mr. Moffat, a Missionary resident with the Bechuana Tribes at Lattakoo, 20 April 1824, p. 421.

⁹¹ CA CO 4447

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ J. Clarke & G. Kolbe, 5 February 1830, In Pellissier “*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*” p. 178.

and Kolbe⁹⁴, who vouched for the character of Flink, having “every reason to believe that he was not the person who robbed the colonists.”⁹⁵

Evidently, the precariousness of the situation in which the missionaries found themselves jeopardised the long-term viability of the mission station. Any hope of maintaining the institution would have rested upon the joint efforts of the LMS and the Cape government alike. However, John Philip was still very much engaged in Griqua politics, his influence and reputation bolstered by his personal achievement in securing the passing of Ordinance 50 in January 1829. As far the Cape authorities were concerned, their efforts to control the northward progression of the trekboers beyond the official boundaries of the Colony continued to prove futile. Although the establishment of the institution had the government’s sanction, there was little that Cape Town or Graaf-Reinet could do to put a cease to trekboer incursions into the Transorangia. This reality led Richard Miles to lament that “assistance towards the support of the Bushmen was promised by the colonial government, but no control or interference whatever in the management of the mission has been contemplated.”⁹⁶ Already in October 1830, still three years prior to the eventual abandonment of the mission station by the LMS, Miles believed that “its prosperous or even permanent establishment is only dubious.”⁹⁷

It is also not clear what Philip was expecting of the mission at Bushman Station. A general state of calm between the farmers and the San had been achieved as was attested to by Clarke. The continuation of missionary work at the location had the government’s sanction, including that of Lieutenant-Governor Bourke, so there was no possibility of a repeat of the unfortunate events that culminated in the closures of Toornberg and Hephzibah. Moreover, the drought, which had curtailed the early success of the institution and had resulted in a sharp decrease in the amount of produce extracted from the fields since 1830 onwards, had by the beginning of 1833 begun to let up. By April, several rain showers had restored the gardens to their former condition. However, two months later in June 1833, Philip released Bushman Station to the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society, who, under the auspices of Jean Pierre Pellissier, renamed the institution Bethulie and re-orientated its focus towards the Thlaping. This marked the final abandonment of the San by the LMS.

⁹⁴ George Kolbe worked at Bushman Station until March 1831, at which time he moved to Philippolis.

⁹⁵ J. Clarke & G. Kolbe, 5 February 1830, In Pellissier “*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*” p. 178.

⁹⁶ R. Miles, 27 October 1830, CWMA, *Report to the Directors of the LMS*, Fiche 165.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

With regards to the contributing factors that culminated in the release of the mission, the dislike that Philip appears to have harboured for Clarke is worth noting. He suggested that the mission had not lived up to the Society's expectations due to Clarke's alleged lack of appropriate skills and qualities that Philip deemed necessary to succeed at the task. Philip expressed these sentiments to the Directors of the LMS when he commented that while Clarke was certainly a pious man, "it requires more than piety... to conduct with success a mission among the untutored Bushmen", the resources for which Clarke was said to have lacked – "To carry on such a mission with any prospect of success we must not only have a man such as we have not at present in Africa to take charge of it, but it would require an expenditure which we cannot at present bestow upon it..."⁹⁸

In a response to Clarke's inquiry as to where he would be posted following the release of the institution, Philip asserted "Though placed at the head of the Bushman Mission which was at the time a matter of necessity with me, having nobody else to place there, yet you must be aware that you have never been recognised as a Missionary, you have been there as a Mechanic and Catechist merely, and that the Society at home does not know you under any other character."⁹⁹ It is not clear to what extent Philip and Campbell's recommendations in their Memorial of 1820 were put into effect at the Cape, however, it is clear that Philip continued to make a distinction between those appointed as missionaries and those appointed as mechanics well into his superintendency.

Unfortunately for Clarke – and it appears that it was unbeknown to him – Philip regarded him as a member of the latter group. The condescending tone inherent in many of Philip's letters to Clarke suggests that Philip had very little respect for the man and certainly for his efforts at Bushman Station. Nonetheless, gauging from the protests Clarke made upon both the settling of Adam Kok II's Griquas at Philippolis and the release of Bushman Station to the Paris Missionary Society, it appears that he possessed a certain disposition towards the San. His eagerness to establish Bushman Station after the steady demise of the San population at Philippolis also bore testament to this. Yet, in spite of this, it was Clarke who in a letter of correspondence to Philip in April 1833 stated that "they [the Bushmen] cannot be considered of equal importance in rank as the neighbouring tribes around..."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ J. Philip, 20 June 1833, In Pellissier "*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*" p. 186.

⁹⁹ J. Philip, 19 June 1833, In Pellissier "*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*" p. 189.

¹⁰⁰ J. Clarke, 23 April 1833, In Pellissier "*Jean Pierre Pellissier van Bethulie*" p. 185. Following the release of Bushman Station to the Paris Missionary Society in 1833, James Clarke took up the position of catechist at the Kat River mission under the tutelage of James Read.

This was very much a confirmation of where Philip's ambitions lay. He had undertaken a tour of the country north of the Orange River in 1832, the year prior to the release of Bushman Station. During this tour Philip observed what must have appeared to him as an alarming state of affairs. The integrity of the Griqua captaincies was not only being undermined by internal schisms, but they were also complicit in the ongoing Korana and Bergenaar raids that had been contributing to the unstable population shifts in the interior. The growing power of Mzilikazi and the continuing influx of the white colonists into the region would have reinforced his consternation.¹⁰¹ He set about to rejuvenate the captaincies and save his grandiose plan from imminent failure. There was little room for accommodating a minor mission settlement such as the one at Bushman Station. It is remarkable that Philip accused the British authorities at the Cape of sacrificing the interests of the Khoisan at "the shrine of a Boer-English union", for certainly he was responsible for sacrificing the Society's missions to the San at the shrine of Griqua consolidation and personal political influence.¹⁰²

Due to the growing numbers of invitations for missionaries from prominent figures such as Mzilikazi and Moshoeshoe – who regarded the missionaries as potentially useful mediators with the Colony, in keeping with the sentiments expressed by the Namaqua and Griquas earlier in the century – the mission field in the interior was burgeoning and Philip's prospects for supplying the demand were curtailed by the LMS' financial constraints.¹⁰³ In response, Philip turned to the Paris Missionary Society and others, such as the American Board Mission, for support. The political autonomy of the Griqua captaincies was steadily reversed over the course of the subsequent decades and the frontier tightened its hold on those tracts of country that had been the last vestiges of independence open to the San in the Middle Orange River region.

¹⁰¹ M. Legassick "The Northern Frontier to 1840: The Rise and Decline of the Griqua People" In R. Elphick & H. Giliomee (eds.) "The Shaping of South African Society" p. 397.

¹⁰² J. Philip "Researches in South Africa" Vol. 1, p. 116. See also A. Bank "The Great Debate and the Origins of South African Historiography" In *Journal of African History*, 38, 1997, p. 264.

¹⁰³ See the discussion by N. Etherington "The Great Treks" p. 193.

5) Conclusion

“Why do you transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”

Gospel of Matthew 15:3

The notable failures and relative successes of the LMS among the San must be located within the changing social, political and economic contexts of the north-eastern Cape frontier during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The disintegration of missionary work at Blydevooruitzicht Fontein and Sak River does appear to have been largely due to the degree of independence still maintained by the San in the region at the time, rousing their open hostility towards the missions.¹ Yet, these early setbacks should also be located within the extended colonial context, recognising that the San communities targeted by the LMS were by the time of the Society’s arrival, reeling from the effects of thirty years of concerted resistance to trekboer encroachment. Indeed, as discussed, the initiation of mission work among the San was undertaken in response to requests from the San themselves for such to occur at the time of the arrival of the LMS at the Cape.

Were the San in a state of social dissolution by the turn of the 19th century? It certainly seems that this was the case. Thus, the usefulness of the “social crisis” explanation – espoused by various authors in order to account for the widespread receptivity demonstrated towards the missionaries by sizeable sections of the south-western Cape’s indigenous populous – in this study is brought into question. Though the San communities of the north-eastern Cape interior maintained a degree of independence, in that they remained un-bonded to colonial farm labour well into the 19th century, it has been established that the use of the term ‘independence’ is problematic, as the economic base upon which their survival depended had been steadily eroded from the mid-18th century onwards.

Furthermore, by the time of its abandonment, the Sak River mission was a ‘mixed-race’ community, comprised of an amalgam of Cape characters with diverse social and ethnic origins. The failure of this mission, as well as those founded subsequently, which were also mixed-race settlements, must therefore be sought outside the debate pertaining to the San’s perceived lack of receptivity to the Gospel and its existential implications. This argument is based upon an array of alleged counter-productive cultural nuances – including the San’s so-called lack of any form of government or

¹ This was testified to by Vos. See Introduction.

leadership, appreciation for property and structured religion. The discussion has demonstrated that many of these unfounded assumptions are perpetuated because they fail to take into account the San's cultural adaptations in response to colonial pressures over time. Owing to the widely dispersed nature of the San communities throughout the north-eastern Cape interior, certain kraals would have courted or resisted colonial influence in varying degrees. Therefore, it is not possible to paint the topic with a single brush-stroke and make sweeping conclusions concerning their interactions with the missionaries. However, what is clear is that the assertion that the San were incapable of being acculturated or 'Christianised' is without basis. Szalay refers to such contentions as "clichés of South African ethnography."²

Although much recent work has been done to disentangle the historical treatment of the San, unfortunately, the assumption that the San were incapable of acculturation has infused itself into South African historiography as well. One of many examples is that found in Walker's *"A History of Southern Africa"*, in which he states "... the Bushmen, utterly unable to adapt their style of life to changed conditions, desperately defended their hunting grounds."³ When defence and retreat were no longer feasible, the LMS' mission stations became some of the final sites at which certain individuals and kraals could retain a degree of independence. Indeed, both conflict and cooperation characterised the San's responses to the closing frontier in the north-eastern Cape interior. Cooperation with the missionaries afforded many, at various intervals, much sought after security.

As has been demonstrated, acculturation did occur to a certain extent on each of the LMS mission stations. Not necessarily as rapidly as some of the missionaries may have wanted or anticipated, but cultural adaptation in various forms did, nonetheless, take place. Concerning the question of conversion and the frustrations the missionaries expressed in their attempts to 'Christianise' the San, the measure of whether their work can be considered a 'success' or not, ought to be done in terms of individual responses as opposed to group responses. Unfortunately, with regards to the San and the San missions, such an exercise lies beyond the reach of the historian and the historical record. Nonetheless, Penn has rightly pointed out that as a result of colonial dispossession and dislocation "The social fabric of entire societies had been torn apart, resulting in attendant cultural and

² M. Szalay *"The San and the Colonisation of the Cape, 1770-1879"* p. 114.

³ E. Walker *"A History of Southern Africa"* p. 97.

psychological trauma for *individual members*” (my emphasis).⁴ Some sought refuge at the mission stations. The appeal of Christian conversion will always remain elusive to assessment.

The relative successes of the missions at Toornberg and Hephzibah point towards cultural adaptation in response to the increasing pressures of the advancing colonial frontier. By the time that these missions were founded, the San were being squeezed between trekboer encroachment from the south and Griqua consolidation from the north. The frontier was closing around them. Certainly this may account for the remarkably high numbers of inhabitants recorded at these mission stations during their short lived tenure, even several years after they had been abandoned by a resident missionary.

Indeed, as the statistics recorded by the census of the Cape’s mission stations, undertaken in 1849, show, the average population of a LMS mission station at the time stood at about 380. Consider that the census was conducted following the emancipation of the Khoikhoi through Ordinance 50 of 1829, as well as the emancipation of the slaves in 1834 and the culmination of the apprenticeship period in 1838. These events contributed to an increase in the population numbers of many mission stations throughout the Cape. Therefore, with the combined population of Toornberg and Hephzibah estimated to have been 1 700, these stations attracted a resident community well above the average for LMS missions, well before the spike in mission population numbers experienced during the late 1830s and early 1840s.⁵ As such, when the LMS’ efforts among the San are treated as having been failures, it is necessary to question in what sense they are being judged as so.

The failures of Toornberg and Hephzibah, as well as Philippolis and Bushman Station, were very much due to events and processes beyond the control of the resident missionaries and the mission residents alike. It must be acknowledged that the local histories of the numerous mission stations dotted throughout and beyond the Cape Colony during the early 19th century were very diverse.⁶ Each station was bound by the influences of its spatial and temporal contexts. This was attested to by the *South African Commercial Advertiser* in February 1849:

In some the land is naturally very barren and incapable of much improvement... In other instances, the greater capabilities of the ground have been brought out by

⁴ N. Penn “The Orange River Frontier Zone, c. 1700-1805” In A. Smith (ed.) “*Einiqualand: Studies of the Orange River Frontier*” p. 90.

⁵ Statistics included in R. Viljoen & R. Ross “The 1849 Census of Cape Missions” Conf. Paper, p. 19.

⁶ R. Viljoen & R. Ross “The 1849 Census of Cape Missions” Conf. Paper, p. 6.

*unwearied industry... One thing, however, is true of them all, and they have it in common with towns and villages all over the world. They are the means, and the only means ever yet devised for the effectual suppression of vagrancy in a country where the lands have been suddenly appropriated in immense blocks by individuals, or single families...*⁷

In terms of the initial intentions behind the missions to the San, the LMS experienced a degree of success. In the end, however, the Society's track record among the San was disappointing. The reasons for this are complex. Through the combination of a variety of factors, characters and processes – including pecuniary difficulties, drought, missionary in-fighting, executive decisions, and political agendas – the LMS mission to the San was by no means fated to fail, yet this was ultimately the outcome.

⁷ *South African Commercial Advertiser*, 24 February 1849.

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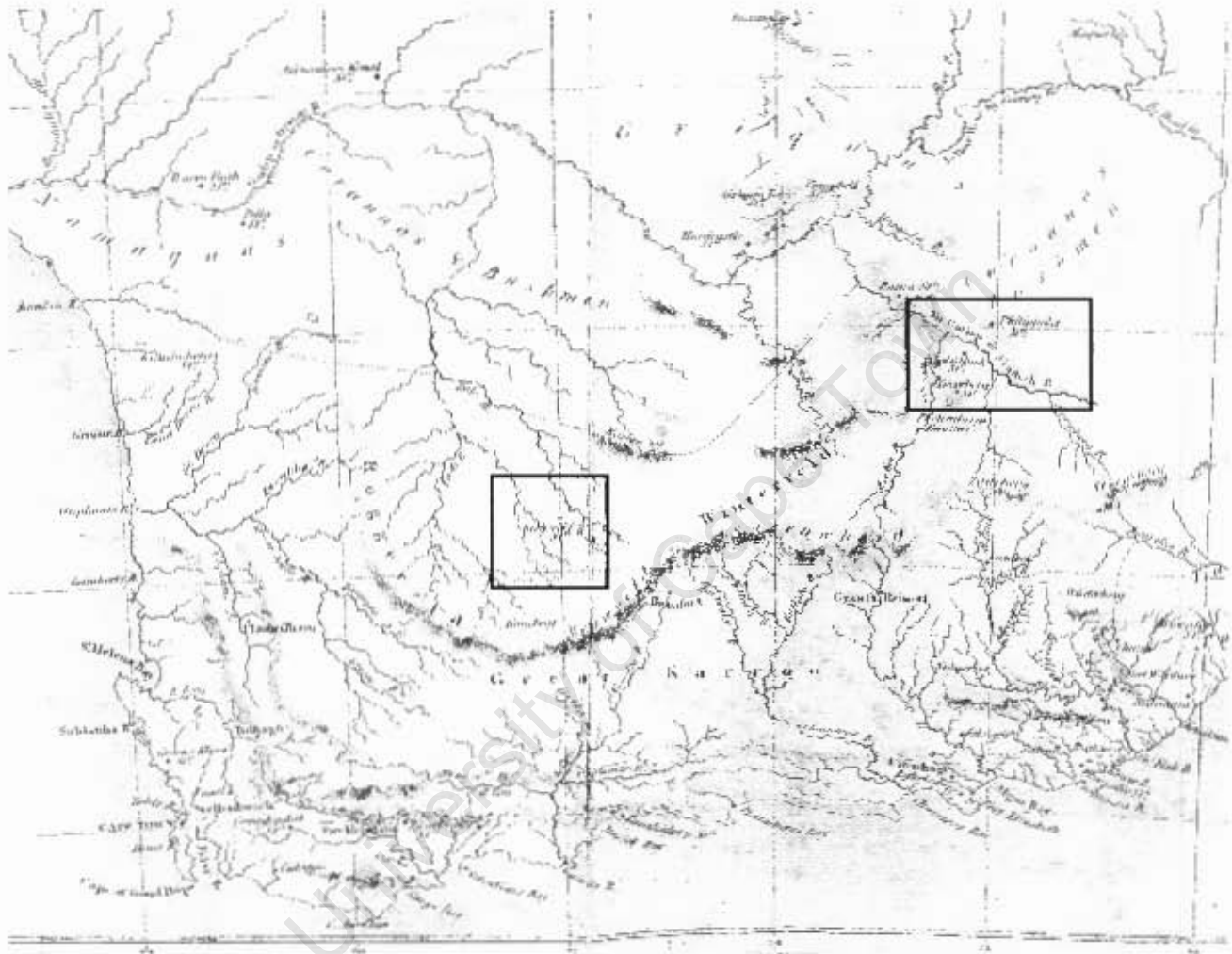
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7) Appendix A

Map of the Cape interior showing the locations of the Sak River Mission (Kicherer's Station), as well as Toornberg, Hephzibah and Philippolis. (Philip, J. *Researches in South Africa*, Vol. 2, 1828.)



8) Appendix B

Map of the north-eastern Cape interior showing the locations of Toornberg, Hephzibah, Ramah and Konnah. (Campbell, J. *Travels in South Africa, Undertaken at the Request of the London Missionary Society, Being a Narrative of a Second Journey in the Interior of that Country*, Vol. 1, 1822.)

